



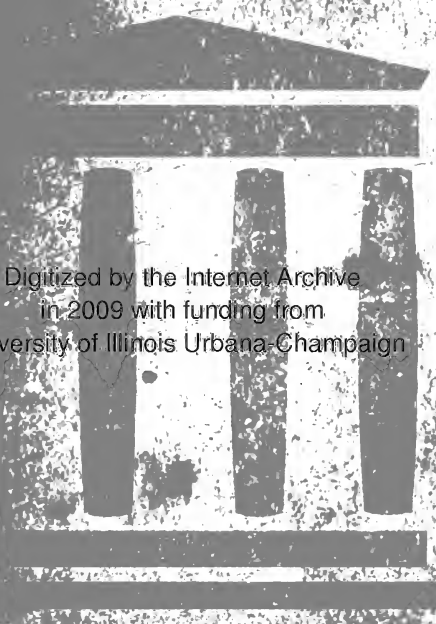


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THE
BANKER-LORD:

A NOVEL.

“ Were all things plain, then all sides must agree,
And faith itself be lost in certainty ;
To live uprightly, then, is sure the best—
To save ourselves, and not to damn the rest.”—DRYDEN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1840.

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THE BANKER-LORD.

CHAPTER I.

LORD LISBRIAN lost no time in obeying the summons of Rochford. He had accidentally met his daughter on her leaving the library, and, struck by her agitated manner, had just succeeded in extracting something of the truth from her as the servant delivered Mr. Rochford's message to him. He obeyed it instantly, and entered the room exclaiming, "Rochford ! my dear fellow, I am so very glad to see you ! you never came in better time for us, though I fear not for yourself. You have heard of poor L'Estrange ?"

Rochford had not ; and when Lord Lisbrian was about to enter into particulars, he interrupted him by saying, "Excuse me, my dear Lord, but however anxious I feel about L'Estrange's illness,

the business I have come about is of a nature so pressing important that I must beg of you to allow me to communicate it without further delay; and yet, now that you are before me, I scarcely know in what form to put it that will not seem almost unpardonably impertinent!"

Lord Lisbrian, prepossessed with the idea that he already knew what the important business was, and pitying what he believed to be the young man's diffidence, clapped him on the shoulder, and gaily exclaimed, "Nay, never blush for it, my dear fellow! we have all had our turn; and I'm not so old yet as to have forgotten mine. Come! you see I am anxious to help you out with your story—especially as, my dear fellow, I may as well confess to you that I met Rosa on her way from you, and that she gave me a clew to the truth. I am sorry for you from my soul, Rochford! I like you better than any young fellow I ever met; upon my soul, I do. You know I never flatter; and were I to consult my own wishes—but, to spare you any unnecessary pain, I may as well tell you, at once, that it is a point on which I could not,—and, indeed, it would be useless if I could—interfere with Rosa, at present. You see, L'Estrange and his friend, and all those gay people about her,—not but what——"

But Rochford here interrupted him, saying, somewhat coldly, "I assure you, my dear Sir, you have

mistaken entirely my object in sending for you ; it is one——”

“ Have I, by Heaven ?” interrupted Lord Lisbrian in his turn, and a deep colour rushed over the father’s cheek.

Rochford instantly reproached himself, and hastened to say, “ Yes, my dear Lord, Lady Rosa has refused me in a manner that admits of no appeal ; but it was not on that subject I wished to speak with you. It is on one more immediately concerning yourself, my dear Lord ; at least, much less concerning *myself*, and therefore, perhaps, more obviously impertinent ; but there is no time for either preface or apology. My Lord, I have sent for you to tell you that my father has ascertained that a sum of money sent through your house some time since has never been lodged in his name in the funds !”

Had a pistol been fired at Lord Lisbrian’s ear, he could not have started more forcibly than he did as Rochford, in a low, impressive tone, uttered these words. His colour went and came, and he looked on him as if he had been detected in the act of abstracting his purse. “ Compose yourself, my dear Lord !” Rochford said. “ I am sorry, but cannot be surprised to see you thus agitated by the announcement. I need not tell you that not for a single moment has any idea occurred to me, or will, I am convinced, to any

of your friends, but regret for the inattention to your professional concerns which the late events in your family have caused ; indeed, my being here at this moment, communicating thus freely with you on the subject, is the best proof of that ; but I believe you have some idea that my poor father has peculiarities—and that they are of a nature to be particularly affected by this intelligence which he has just received—and which, in the first moment of terror and astonishment, he not only believes, but, I lament to say, is determined instantly to act on ; and therefore it is that I am here now, to prepare you for this, and to convey to you the fact, of which I fear you are not yet aware, that—that—” and he hesitated ; until Lord Lisbrian, in a faint but earnest voice, besought him to proceed and relieve him, at least, from suspense. “ Are you aware, then,” he asked, “ that your bank has stopped payment again ? ” Lord Lisbrian gasped out a negative.

“ Then, my dear Lord, I am sorry it has fallen to my lot to give you pain in so many ways at once ; but I would not, to spare myself the task, lose a moment that might be employed in beseeching you to consider what steps can most expeditiously be taken to prevent my father from having recourse to those measures which the law unfortunately puts into his hands in this case.”

Lord Lisbrian's only reply to this was to strike

his hand violently against his forehead, and in a low, subdued, despairing tone, to say, "Rochford, my dear fellow, I am ruined—absolutely ruined—gone! lost! body and soul!"

Rochford looked shocked and even terrified for a moment; but again dismissing his momentary alarm, he said, "Come, come, my dear Lord, you must not speak or feel as if you had been guilty in intention, because the law makes you responsible for the remissness of your clerk; and I assure you time presses. My father may have the legal instruments already in his hands; and I should not have held myself fully justified in making my escape from him to give you this notice, had I the most remote idea myself, that, in so acting, I am doing anything more than preventing him from offering you an insult in the excitement of the moment, which would embitter all his after-life, while, in the present crisis of your affairs, it entailed upon you the most fatal consequences. I have, therefore, flown to you to beseech you to furnish me with proof—demonstrative proof, it must be, to satisfy him—that you were totally ignorant of this remissness until this moment."

Once more Lord Lisbrian struck his hand upon his forehead, even more violently than before; and so deep, so dreadful was the groan he uttered, that once more Rochford felt a vague, undefined terror creep

over him. It did not long remain vague or undefined, however; for, after undergoing a severe fit of the same sort of nervous shivering which had assailed him in that very room once before, and on the very same subject, Lord Lisbrian leaned back in his chair, and in a voice calm from desperation, and, looking Rochford full in the face, said, "Rochford! I have no such proof to give; fortune and honour are gone together! and I am, as I have said, lost and ruined, soul and body!" Rochford, on hearing these words, involuntarily stepped a few paces back, and then stood as if transfixed, and almost doubting his own senses.

"It is true what I tell you," Lord Lisbrian reiterated, in the same calm but hollow tone. "I am a thief, but not a liar! It was not only with my knowledge, but by my orders, that your father's money was embezzled!"

It was now Rochford's turn to undergo a degree of horror that almost amounted to nervousness. He never before felt the full force of dreadful astonishment; and after gazing on Lord Lisbrian for a moment, with a countenance only too expressive of his feelings, he was able to articulate, "Is this really true, my Lord?"

"It is scarcely a subject for jesting upon!" Lord Lisbrian coolly answered; so coolly that one less acquainted with his character, or more ready to

believe in hardened, unexpected villany, must have been disgusted ; but it only induced Rochford to look more intently into his face, and to consider his whole bearing ; and when he did so, and beheld the rigid muscles—and the full and throbbing veins, that told how fierce was the conflict within ; and when he thought of the joyous, reckless character of him who now sat thus humbled and subdued before him—and saw, in that very recklessness, the true secret of the error that had become guilt, and which the sufferer was now himself the first to call so—his whole soul was softened, and burying his face between his hands, the words, “ My Lord, I pity you ! ” were just audible.

Not a word, not a sound was heard in reply. Lord Lisbrian remained perfectly immovable ; and when Rochford, in some anxiety, looked up, he perceived that all the symptoms of internal agitation which he had noticed before had each increased to an alarming degree. He instantly hurried towards him, and kindly laying his hand upon his shoulder, said, “ My Lord, endeavour to compose yourself ! there is yet one who will not abandon the stricken heart even in an hour like this ! ”

Lord Lisbrian slowly turned his eyes on him with an expression of calm but astonished inquiry. “ Can you utter such words to me, Rochford, in this kind sort of way, after what I have told you ? ” he asked.

“ I can ! I do ! my Lord. In the name of Him whose minister I presume to call myself, I bid you be comforted.”

“ Then, by Heaven ! pride shall master me no longer !” Lord Lisbrian exclaimed ; in a broken, thick, half-stifled tone. “ Rochford ! I feel now that you will believe me when I asseverate that you are not yourself more guiltless than I was of intending the crime, the dishonour, the destruction, in which this has ended. Tracey is even now in London with money to replace that which in a moment of temptation, or rather of erroneous reasoning, I directed to be applied to avert the very doom that you have now announced to me ; and which shews me that he was too late, and that I am for ever blasted ! Oh, my poor children ! my poor, beautiful girl !” And, as if her very name had power to bring with it some of her own soft, gentle nature, the moment he uttered it, he burst into a violent flood of tears.

Rochford was delighted to perceive them, as he knew they would prove the best preventives of the evil consequences he dreaded to a man of Lord Lisbrian’s habits, from so much suppressed emotion ; and therefore, suffering them to flow uninterruptedly, it was not until he became again apprehensive of the flight of time that he ventured to ask his unfortunate friend what he proposed doing.

"I know not ! I know not !" he exclaimed, despondingly. "I can think of nothing, do nothing ; I feel I am gone !"

"Shall I send Hubert to you, my Lord ? He might assist you in considering what can now be done ?"

"Not for the world ! I would not—could not see one of them at this moment to save my soul ! Good God ! with what different feelings I entered this room ! Did I hear you right, Rochford ?" he said, suddenly changing his tone ; "or have I dreamt that you told me you proposed for Rosa ?"

"I told you, my Lord, that she had rejected me in a manner that precludes all hope for me."

"Good Heavens ! Did you tell her of this business ? or even of the bank ?"

"No, certainly not."

"Oh, why did you not ? I will speak to her !"

"Pardon me, my Lord, but I think you will act injudiciously by doing so ; for, if I have any insight into Lady Rosa's character, hers is not a pride that would accept the hand of a man in adversity whom she scorned in prosperity."

"True, true ! indeed, I believe you are right, and that's a hit at me ! but until you are a father yourself, Rochford, and of such a daughter, you will not be able to excuse me."

"I do, my Lord, most sincerely."

“And is it possible you were willing to marry her, knowing all you did of our affairs?”

“I proved it, my Lord.”

“Well! you certainly are a noble fellow, Rochford; but after all, you would have starved together, for your father would never have forgiven you as matters are now.”

“I think he would in time; and at all events, it would have been a comfort and support to her to have one more heart devoted to her service, or linked in her misfortunes, if she could have accepted it.”

“So it would,” Lord Lisbrian said, but evidently thinking, at the moment, of something else; and presently, in the same absent manner, he added, “I wonder how Halimore will behave on this occasion!”

Rochford coloured, and looked on him for a moment in astonishment; then walked towards the window, as much pained by the general levity this speech betrayed, as by the want of feeling towards himself. He had not much time to think of it, however, when his attention, as well as Lord Lisbrian’s was arrested by a peculiarly hasty step along the hall; and a moment after, without the slightest notice, or even the ceremony of a knock, heated, yet pale, agitated, and covered with dust, Tracey burst into the room.

Both Lord Lisbrian and Rochford started at this apparition; but without giving them time to ask a question, and scarcely retaining breath to answer one, if he had, he flew up, foaming, to Lord Lisbrian, and seizing his arm between his own trembling hands, he gasped out—

“Fly! fly! for your life, my dear Lord! Mither Rochford, for the love of God, saize the other arm and dhrag him along! Oh Lord! oh Lord! My Lord, what are you makin’ yourself stiff agin me for? instead of *suplin’* yourself to run, and two constable divils at my heels to take you!”

“What do you mean, Sir?” said Lord Lisbrian haughtily, for, never having been at this extremity before, nor, in any alarm, having contemplated the possibility of it, he felt what probably has been every man’s first feeling on the first similar occasion—namely, insulted dignity.

“Oh, for God sake dhrop your pride for this wonst, my dear Lord! and I’ll give you lave to thrample me undher your feet to make up for it afterwards!” poor Tracey exclaimed. “But come your ways with me now before they have you!”

“But what is it? Who is coming, Tracey?” Rochford asked.

“Och, Mither Rochford! who but two divils of constables at the shute of Lord—Aouh! my God! my God!” The poor little man suddenly shrieked

out, as some sudden recollection flashed across his scared intellects,—and, burying his face in his hands, he asked in a sort of dreadful whisper, “Have you caught him yourself, Misther Rochford?” Rochford waited to hear no more, but darted from the room, and in a moment after they heard the hall-door clap behind him. “Oh, blessed Lord!” exclaimed poor Tracey. “As sure as day he hard them comin’, and is off through shame, and I left here to work with this proud man by myself!”

Lord Lisbrian now started as if he heard them too. “By heavens! you may be right, Tracey,” he exclaimed. “I must run for it! One hour’s imprisonment, and all is lost!” And he bolted from the room, closely pursued by Tracey, who, in his flight, grasping at a green cover that was thrown over the billiard-table in the hall, and dragging and rolling it up as he ran along, darted out with him into an old grove at the back of the house.

“And now, my Lord,” he breathlessly exclaimed, “up into a three! It’s your only chance till the purshute is over. Here’s a fine big one that you can get up asy, and there’s a branch you can sit on! And here!” heaving the cloth up into the tree, as he spoke, “God put it into my heart, as I passed, to bring this cloth along with us; and if you wrap it round you, divil a bit they’ll know you from a lafe! Up with you, my Lord, and I’ll help you!”

But Lord Lisbrian's climbing days were over; and the assistance Tracey promised was more commensurate with his heart than with his height. Lord Lisbrian could not get into the tree; and there was not another, within view, in the long-neglected grounds that promised concealment so well.

"My God, my God! this day and hour! What's to be done at all, at all?" cried poor Tracey, nearly at his wits' end,—“and Lady Rosa and all? Do you think, my Lord, if you stud on my back, could you get up? Thry!” And he stooped; but—whether from his own agitation, or from Lord Lisbrian's weight, or from both together, the latter no sooner placed one foot upon him, and raised the other from the ground, than Tracey yielded to the pressure, apparently without the slightest attempt at resistance, and Lord Lisbrian and he rolled together on the ground. “Well! I'm a worthless crachur! there's no denyin' it,” he said, as he recovered his feet, and helped Lord Lisbrian to regain his. “And you're a fine, heavy, big man, my Lord! There's just one thing more for it—do you think, if I was to go up first into the three, I could pull you after me?”

“Yes; but you are just as likely to be able to accomplish that as the other.”

“Oh, not at all, my Lord, beggin' your pardon. Strength never was my best, but *supleness* always.”

And in a moment, climbing into the tree, and twisting one arm firmly round a branch, he held the other down to Lord Lisbrian, and they were presently seated together in the most impervious part, both rolled up in the green cloth, a liberty for which Tracey made many and unaffected apologies. Having anxiously listened however, for some time, no signs or sounds of pursuit or searching were to be heard; and Tracey, conjecturing that the servants at the Castle had sent the constables on a wrong scent, began to congratulate Lord Lisbrian on his successful escape. Lord Lisbrian, however, was anything but an object of congratulation at that moment. Betrayed, by the sophistry of sudden temptation, into an act which, placed in its true colours, he would have been the foremost to condemn, nothing short of the horror of being seized in his own castle, in the midst of his family and guests, prevented him from giving himself up in despair at the first moment;—but a little reflection, without bringing him any comfort, pointed out to him the necessity of learning some particulars of what had happened, in order to consider how he ought to act now—whether to give himself up at once on the capital charge, which he had gathered from Rochford was against him, and so consign everything to ruin—or, by concealing himself until Lord Still-Organ could be satisfied in some way, resume

the management of his affairs, and exert the prudence in which he now bitterly acknowledged he had been lamentably deficient.

The first question he asked was, what Tracey meant by saying he had no longer either clerks or bank.

“ Whethen, sorry I am to say that I meant the thruth, my Lord,” he answered. “ I just got to London with the five thousand pounds,—raised, you know where,—and hadn’t left the office in the bankin’-house after lodging it, when who should come in but Sir Charles Wilton, with his arum in a sling of all things in the world! and lookin’ mighty pale. But faith, he got red enough when he seen me! and, but the light nearly left my own eyes the same minute! Wasn’t that quare now, my Lord?—as if we both knew what was inside one another; and, but what I thought it was in a dhrame I was, from not havin’ slep for two days and two nights, owin’ to the say-sickness and the whirlin’ of them cursed coaches! But out he whips an ordher for three thousand pounds, and demands to have it cashed immadiately. Steen glances one eye at the ordher, and the other at the clock,—for I was watchin’ him,—and keeps palaverin’ Sir Charles till the clock strikes three; and then, bowin’ to him mighty civil, whispers him to be the first to call next morning!

“Sir Charles was going to fly into a passion, but whatever Steen whispered into his ear, he contrived to pacify him, and out he went, and me afther him, and the doors closed—and, if they did, we never saw the inside of them again ! When we went early, sure enough, next mornin’, there was young Kelly, and the other clerks, all standin’ staring with their mouths open. I d’n know why, rightly, I went so early myself ; but somehow, not feelin’ at my ase, I thought I’d just see it out. Well, a crowd began to gather, and Sir Charles he began to get terrified. I asked the name of Steen’s lodgin’s, and set off there in one of them quare things with a sate on one side—for all the world like a pig with one ear, that beckoned to me very civilly when he seen me runnin’ along. But faith, when I arrived there, I guessed in a jiffy how matters wor ! The bird was flown, and hadn’t been there since nine o’clock the night before ! Nor tale nor tidins of him to be had anywhere. Back I whirled again to what they call ‘the Strand,’—though not a drop of say-water, nor any other water, near it,—and there, by that time, the crowd was terrifyin’ ; and I met Sir Charles Wilton, foam’in’ and cursin’ himself black in the face but he’d have his money, or he’d expose you to the world ; for that he had you in his power, and that bankrupt wouldn’t be all he’d make of you ! So, though I didn’t, nor

don't yet know, what he meant, I had no time to spare ; but, keepin' my little one-eared pig still, I set off with him to a coach-office ; and, by good luck, catchin' one just startin' for Ireland, I whips up on it, and comes over, and thought I'd get all settled by tellin' you in time ; but, as I was ridin' along on a horse I hired at ——, who should come tearin', meeting me, on a horse, but a servant of Lord Still-Organ's, a lad I knew since he wasn't the bigness of my knee,—and you'll allow that wasn't big, my Lord. 'Whethen, where are you goin' in such a hurry, Mick?' says I. 'Whethen, I'm goin' on a quare message,' says he, 'and you're a quare person for me to meet ! but since the Lord sent you in my way, I'll tell you that. I'm agoin', then, wid a letther to Misther Blake, the magisthrate ; and I'm doubtin', be what came down from the parlour, that it's somethin' agin' Lord Lisbrian ; for, at the very same time, Tom Hannesty was sent off gallopin' to bring two constables without a minute's delay.' Well, maybe, my Lord, I didn't throw the reins on my horse's neck then ! and I don't think Mick made the more speed on his errand for meeting me. And now, my Lord, what are we to do ?"

"I know not,—in truth, I know not !" Lord Lisbrian exclaimed, in intense agony of mind. "Would to God I had some one to advise with in this ex-

tremity ! To be a prisoner even for a night would be utter ruin ! Tracey, I must hide—whatever be the consequences—till I can raise the money to pay Lord Still-Organ ; but the first step is to pursue that rascally Steen—for now I am sure he must have funds in his hands—and to see my creditors, and say something to appease them. I wonder if I dare start, this moment, for London myself ?”

“ This moment, my Lord ! and the whole country up about you ? Not that any of them would inform on you ; but you wouldn’t find a man nor a horse at home to take you on, and might light on the constables or some of Lord Still-Organ’s people. No, my Lord—but I’ll tell you what you’ll do—you’ll wait here till the coast’s clear between this and my little house ; and then you’ll come, fair and asy, there with me, and be off with the first light.”

“ Your house ! my poor, faithful Tracey !” exclaimed Lord Lisbrian. “ If they do you justice that would be the first place they would search.”

“ And that’s the very rason I mintion it to you, my Lord ; because, of course, as it would, they will be there and gone before that ; and the oul garden there is an elegant hidin’ place ! great high walls, and an iron gate, and a nice little shed, that used to be a garden-house, long ago. So, that if you had fears to come inside the house—though, indeed, you

needn't, I'm sure, by this time—you could stop there, and they'd never find you, at night, no more than a rat; but it's what I'm thinkin', my Lord, I ought to slip down first and see what way is things at the Castle, and Lady Rosa and all."

"But they will follow you returning, and track me out, if you do," said Lord Lisbrian; "otherwise I should wish you to do so, in order to tell Hubert what has happened, and to entreat of him not to lose one hour in hurrying to London and seeing young Kelly. He can take our own horses without danger."

"As for that, my Lord, there is not one in the Castle wouldn't rather die than thrack you out for harm; and if there was, sure I can watch my time; but faith, I ought to go, my Lord."

Lord Lisbrian, unable to controvert this reasoning, consented to his departure; and while he is stealing his way towards the Castle, we shall take a glance at what was passing there in the meantime.

CHAPTER II.

LORD LISBRIAN'S flight, it would appear, had been premature ; at least, no law officers had yet made their appearance at Lisbrian Castle. But as his rush from the house, followed no less rapidly by Tracey, had not passed wholly unobserved, the alarm and conjecture excited by it was not much less than if he had actually been seized ; and in a very short time, the rumour was spread through the castle that he had been. Almost the first person Hubert L'Estrange thought of in the confusion was his sister. She, escaping from the untimely meeting with her father in the hall, had, instead of returning to the company, sought the solitude of her own apartment ; and there, falling upon her knees beside a sofa, and burying her head in its cushions, endeavoured at once to prevent her tears from gushing forth, and her thoughts from return-

ing to the scene that had just passed. In this position she was surprised by the hasty tap of her brother at her door, and although she started up and endeavoured to banish the traces of her emotion, enough still remained to lead him into the supposition that she had heard of their father's flight, and he began to endeavour to console her on the subject before she was aware that she had any such cause for anxiety.

When she did understand him, however, it really appeared as if her heart was incapable of further suffering at that moment, and merely bowing her head over her clasped hands, it was not until he asked if he should send Miss Wilton to her, as his presence was absolutely necessary elsewhere, that she shewed signs of unwonted animation by the eagerness with which she exclaimed, "Oh, not for worlds!" And saying she would go to Lord L'Estrange's room in a few minutes, she suffered him to depart without another word. The few minutes, however, crept on to many—and still she found herself incapable of moving or collecting her ideas—and it is impossible to say how long more she might have continued so, if she had not been roused by the information that Tracey was in the house, and had sent to know if he might see her.

"Tracey! Mr. Tracey?" she vacantly repeated. Then, as if recollecting that he had been long ab-

sent, asked when he had returned—and on hearing that it was before the confusion, she desired that he might be immediately admitted. The poor little agent absolutely started when he beheld the havoc that a few hours of intense suffering had made in her appearance ; and, although he had seated himself on the furthest of a row of chairs from that which she occupied, two minutes had not elapsed before, moving regularly from one to the other, he found himself close beside her ; and, perceiving that she was shivering, asked, in a low and most expressively affectionate tone, “Is it cold you are, my Lady?”

She answered, “No,” and happily burst into tears. Poor Tracey blew his nose stealthily, and clearing his throat ostentatiously, said he had good news for her. She looked up inquiringly, but did not speak.

“Your father’s safe, my dear child,” he said, gently rubbing her hand with the tips of his fingers; and it was the first time he had ever used, ever contemplated the possibility of his using, such familiarity.

“Thank God!” she fervently exclaimed. “Is he returned then? Where is he at this moment, Mr. Tracey?”

“In a three!” he answered, with the most doleful solemnity; and glanced round the room to see that he had not been too communicative. Lady

Rosa proceeded to ask some further questions; and when she learned that the bank was broken—and that the arrest was at the suit of Lord Still-Organ—and that therefore Rochford must have been aware of all when he proposed for her—she bowed her head into her hands, and, though bitter, scalding tears of despair would no longer be restrained, her pure heart echoed the words, “Thank God, I did not know it sooner!”

How much longer Tracey might have forgotten every other concern in endeavouring to comfort one towards whom his feelings partook of the homage that mortals yield to angels, it might be difficult to say; but that, just as he was groaning in sympathy with her last burst of weeping, and endeavouring to think what it immediately proceeded from, the sound of a peculiarly heavy, but firm, tramping footstep was heard, even along the deeply-carpeted passage, and Tracey springing from his seat, exclaimed, “Praise and glory be to God this blessed night, and for ever, for that sound! for if you’re above ground, Mrs. Kelly, and that’s you!” And rushing to the door, he found himself, for one passing instant, clasped in her motherly arms; and then, as Lady Rosa, in some surprise, and a little natural embarrassment, went forward to meet her, she extended them to her, and, without a word spoken on either side, they were, in an instant, clasped to each other’s hearts, and sobbing as if those hearts would break.

“And thanks be to God, again and again, for that sight!” exclaimed Tracey, trusting to his own sobs being drowned in theirs; “and if Misther Rochford knew the way I say it, he wouldn’t bid me not! and now I can lave you in pace and comfort, my darlin’ young lady! and go back to tell your poor father that you have them will take care of you!” And, without another word, he departed.

Genuine and natural feeling—no matter how ludicrous its manifestations may appear when reason coolly reviews them afterwards—seldom fails to find an echo in the heart at the moment. Although Lady Rosa L’Estrange scarcely remembered to have felt the maternal embrace, and was certainly unaccustomed to any resembling those she now experienced from Mrs. Kelly, who, still holding her in her arms, rocked her and herself to and fro as a nurse might do to compose a noisy child to sleep, she yet experienced a degree of comfort from them which, in her despair, she scarcely ever expected to have known again; and Mrs. Kelly sympathizing in this effect, thought she might now venture to endeavour to lead her into speaking of her sorrows, which, with her, was a sovereign remedy. “And so he’s gone, my child! the papa’s took up!” was her commencement—and Lady Rosa uttered such a scream in reply as made her kind-hearted friend stagger several paces back, and gaze on her with astonishment and alarm.

“Taken up!” Lady Rosa repeated, as soon as she could find utterance. “Did you say they have found my father?”

“Oh weary on my foolish tongue! no, my child, I did not—but came to take him I meant—and sure that same’s almost as bad. And your poor brother sick! and my poor child altogether! oh willasthru! oh wallasthru!” and she gave way to a fresh burst of weeping. “But this is poor comfort I’m giving you! and I come for that purpose!” She exclaimed, endeavouring to control herself. “But when I look at you, my poor beautiful crachur, with your sweet lady-face, and look, altogether! och hone and och hone! and doesn’t know how it’ll end! for, my dear child, there’s no use in talkin’, but I’m afeard of my life there’s but little to come and go upon in this estate, and Steen off with the bank! I’m afeard! I’m afeard!—Now, I am sure I oughtn’t to be sayin’ this to you—but tryin’ to keep up your heart I ought to be; but the truth is, I could no more keep up a false face when I’m all knocked I don’t know how, as I am this blessed day, until sorrow one o’ me but forgets which it’s you or myself that wants the comfort most!”

Lady Rosa could only again press the kind hand that now rested on hers, and ask if Mrs. Kelly had heard any particulars from her son, the second clerk.

“Oh not a word! not the scrape of a pen, jewel; he’s

as thrue as death, though I say it; he just wrote one single line to his father, sayin'—' Don't be un-asy about me. I'll do my duty to the last, plase God, come what will, and my duty at present is silence.' So we never asked a word more, nor wont. But it's what I'm come for now, my child, is to stop here with you and nurse your brother, for that's what you can't be expected to know much about; and I made my way up here to spake to you by yourself, because them two is sittin' in the drawing-room, with their frizzled heads close together, plotting no good, I'll engage. What keeps them here at all, jewel, at such a time? Isn't it very unmannerly of them?" Lady Rosa could not help smiling at the force of genuine sincerity and instinctive truth which led her thus simply to take for granted her own worth over that of the earliest companions of her childhood and youth. Yet, not wishing to confirm her prejudice against them, she made some slight answer, and strongly and sincerely objected to her taking upon herself the troublesome office she proposed.

Mrs. Kelly looked almost offended. "What then? I'm to be nothin' to you in any way?" she asked. "Because I'm not grand enough, or polished enough to make one of your gay dashin' company, is that a rason why I mayn't stay with you when you're alone? or do you ra'lly dislike my

quareness that you're not accustomed to? because if you do, say so, and, though I may be sorry, I'll engage I'll not force myself on you, for all I think I have some little claim on the family besides my likin' to yourself!" To resist kindness thus offered, or rather asserted as a right, would not have been in any way consistent with Lady Rosa's own genuinely kind heart; and, therefore, expressing as much gratitude as Mrs. Kelly would endure, though not nearly as much as she really felt, she consented to put the sick room under her control.

Before she suffered her to commence her new office, however, she insisted upon her having some coffee, and, while she took it, informed her of all she had herself been able to collect from Tracey of the cause of the disastrous events of the evening, of which Mrs. Kelly had only heard vague and inconsistent rumours since her arrival. Lord L'Estrange's illness,—of which the messenger despatched for the physician spread fearful accounts through the neighbourhood as he passed—having been the cause of her visit to her young friend, "who," she said to her worthy husband and family, "must be to be pitied with a house full of grand company, every one no doubt afraid of an Irish faver; and that, as she was bred and born to it, it would be a sin and a shame in her not to go to her."

Her first exclamation on Lady Rosa's ceasing to

speaking, was, a wish that Mr. Rochford were there to give them advice and assistance. "What! although I tell you that it was at Lord Still-Organ's suit my father was to have been arrested?" Lady Rosa exclaimed, with a smile, which, though it deceived her simple-minded friend, would have gone direct to Rochford's heart.

"Well? and are you lookin' at me to see if I think his son had any hand in it?" Mrs. Kelly asked. "See! no more than I had myself, but adores the very thrack of your foot in the dust. Ay, you may start and grow red, honey! but it's the thruth! and it's what I guessed would be before ever you came to Ireland; though indeed I scarcely thought it would come to the pass it has with him, and he is so sober and guarded over himself! A short time ago he left the castle here—I don't know whether it was in any huff, or what—but he came over to us, and there, though he tried to seem mighty gay and lively, and playin' with the children as ushal, I, that was watchin' him, used to see the sweet eyes suddenly look sad; and the smothered sigh swellin' up the waistcoat; and then, the next word he spoke would be sure to be ather of two things, ather somethin' about Lisbrian Castle, or the vanities of the world; and though he always condemned them before, there was a kind of spite like at them now that made me see in a jiffy how it was with him; and

'pon my conscience, I could hardly keep from hugging him for it, for I do think, my child, that, some how or other, ye are intended for one another."

"My dear Mrs. Kelly! what could put such an idea into your head? so unlike as we are in every particular!"

"No, but maybe that's the very rason! I b'lieve in my heart God sometimes just makes people of that sort like one another on purpose not to have everything all runnin' one way."

"That's a delicate way of saying that he would arrest me in my vain and idle courses?"

"And if it is, dear, maybe, you would be of as much use to him in other ways."

"How for instance?" asked Lady Rosa, half smiling.

"Oh, indeed, I don't know that I could just tell at this minute," her friend answered. "Perhaps just as ye both are now, ye are well enough; but if neither of ye had a check, ye might go too far in your own ways; but, at any rate, put it out of your head at once, if such a thought ever came into it, that it would be possible for him to act any part but the kindest and truest by you, and all belongin' to you for your sake. I just know him already as if I had nursed him, and if I seen him this minute dhrivin' a soord into your heart, I'd know it was to keep you from dyin' some worse way; but it's time

I went now about my own business, and I'll bring you word what I think of the poor fellow. I'm not sorry he's light* just at the first, till he gets used to me, so keep up your heart, my jewel, till I come back." And she went to the sick room, accompanied, however, by her young friend, whose anxiety would not permit her to remain behind.

Almost the first glance of the experienced matron was sufficient to convince her that all hope for the delirious sufferer, from human aid, was fallacious; and, as she hastily raised her eyes to those of the attending physician, she read in them an acknowledged confirmation of the fact, without a word exchanged between them on the subject. She led her young friend instantly from the room; and, far from attempting to deceive her with hopes that a few hours at furthest must, she knew, change into disappointment, the more violent from the reaction, she stated to her her own conviction, and presently added that she knew it to be also that of the medical attendant. Lady Rosa heard her with that horror of astonishment which seizes on a young and happy spirit the first time that death's universal power is made practically evident to it by the loss of one dearly loved. And dearly Lady Rosa did love her brother, although their acquaintance, as

* Delirious.

companions and friends at least, might be said to have commenced so lately. From this state of dreadful bewilderment, however, there was no one better calculated to draw her, by alternate soothing, and simple, but direct, and incontrovertible reasoning on the power and right of the Creator over his creatures, than the affectionate and humble-minded friend who now hung over her; and who, finding her services useless in the sick-room, devoted herself entirely to her, since by no entreaties could she prevail upon her to seek repose, in the state of suspense which no reasoning or soothing could entirely remove.

CHAPTER III.

TRACEY, on leaving Lady Rosa and Mrs. Kelly together, had an interview with Hubert; and, a very few words of explanation having sufficed to convince him of the necessity of his starting without a moment's delay for London, on hearing how his sister was engaged, he agreed with Tracey that it was better to spare her feelings any further trial at that moment, and merely giving to his insensible brother one agonized embrace, he fled from the house in a state of mind of which perhaps some idea may be formed, but which happily few have been called upon to experience. Of the real nature of the graver charge against his father neither he nor any one else understood one tittle; he knew, indeed, that it was at the suit of Lord Still-Organ; but believed it, as did every one else, to be some precipitate step

taken by the money-sick old man, on hearing of the stoppage of the bank, for which he would be brought to a severe account hereafter.

The principal objects of his stealthy visit to the castle—which the wild confusion and dismay prevailing there tended rather to favour than impede—thus accomplished, Tracey was about to hasten back, as stealthily, to his hiding-place, when Miss Wilton's maid, Celine, who had been posted as vidette from the first moment of alarm, arrested him with a request so earnest from her lady to be allowed to speak five words with him, that it was not in his kind nature to refuse, and he followed her to Miss Wilton's room.

Perhaps it is scarcely too much to say, that, of all concerned in Lord Lisbrian's flight, there was not one more deeply interested in its consequences than Miss Wilton. From the moment she had despatched her letter to Lord Still-Organ indeed, she had lived in a sort of mental fever, which suspense and expectation alone probably prevented from becoming bodily disease or madness. To this feverish suspense, every day, as it rendered more and more strange her brother's silence, together with Rochford's absence, which seemed to speak of more worldly wisdom than she had dared to count upon, added immeasurably, until the crisis came at last which created hopes as ecstatic as they were visionary.

Although few persons had seen Rochford in the hurried visit he had made to the castle that evening, it was known to a certainty that he had been there at the time of Lord Lisbrian's alarm, and when it was also known that the intended arrest was at the suit of his father, it was but moderate exaggeration and misconception, as the world goes, first to believe, and then positively to affirm, that he had come there himself for no other purpose than to secure it; until, at last, Peggy, the under-housemaid, who owed him a grudge ever since the promise about the new potatoes, persuaded herself, or was persuaded, that Mr. Tracey was seen struggling to release him from Mr. Rochford's gripe, and, finally succeeding, had rolled him up in a green cloth and carried him off in a bundle under his arm! never forgetting, as often as she repeated it, to extol the mercy of God who giveth strength when it is wanted! After all, who will deny that it is a pity there should be error mixed up with such perfect and unlimited belief in the power and presence of the Almighty?

It has been said that one of the fatal mistakes in Miss Wilton's calculations was underrating the characters of others; indeed, it is scarcely possible that persons deficient in principle themselves, however they may admire or esteem a particular individual, should not occasionally fall into this blunder; be-

cause few are so utterly depraved as not to persuade themselves that some of their own maxims and motives are, at the least, prudent, and prudence being called a virtue, is one with which they are therefore apt to invest the highest beau-ideals of their imagination, when brought into contact with worldly circumstances. Miss Wilton knew that Rochford had been at Lisbrian Castle at the moment specified; and, without exactly believing Peggy's story of the green cloth, it did not enter into her head to doubt the probability of the cause assigned for his visit. If she had ever been in the habit of mental devotion, she would have given thanks at such fruition of her purpose, and the only drawback to her happiness was the escape of Lord Lisbrian, which, by depriving Lord Still-Organ of the immediate advantages of her information, would, she calculated, render one of his irritable, unreasonable temper less gratefully her friend. And, while she was lamenting this untoward event, and weighing in her mind the possibility of counteracting it, a circumstance occurred which added tenfold anxiety to a desire already sufficiently vivid.

In the pre-occupation of his time and thoughts by the alarming illness of his son, Lord Lisbrian, who always kept the key of the post-bag himself, had neglected to open it that day; and, though Miss Wilton had more than once alluded to it, and

he had left the room each time seemingly for the purpose, something had always occurred to intercept his return, and from hour to hour it was deferred, and she was obliged to endure her impatience as she could. The last attempt she had made was when Lady Rosa was called out of the room after dinner, but Lord Lisbrian feeling instantly in his pockets, with many apologies and exclamations of regret, remembered he had left the key in the waistcoat he had changed for dinner, and by way of making some amends for his remissness, was going to fetch it, when he met his daughter after her interview with Rochford, and the scenes that followed effectually banished it from his mind once more.

Not so, however, from Miss Wilton's. More than ever astonished at not hearing from her brother, now that the event he had anticipated had occurred, and believing that each day must bring the desired explanation, no sooner was she perfectly convinced that Lord Lisbrian had made his escape, than she sent Celine to his room for the key, and, opening the post-bag, found the letter she expected. It contained only these words—headed, "Private and confidential," doubtless to prevent surprise—

"All is lost. I was overturned on my way to London, and my shoulder dislocated, so that I was unable to move until it was too late. As our only

hold over him now is through his affair with Lord Still-Organ, and as his chicanery there may not be known, I shall be with you in a few hours after this reaches you, to see what terms I can make for my secret, and to find out whatever that O'Shaughnessy girl knows of her worthy lover's movements, as here there is no clew to him. I merely scrawl this in the meantime as a precautionary measure, to tell you if Lisbrian should attempt flight, you must secure him with your own hands, if necessary, sooner than suffer him to do so, which will be in your power, as he cannot hear of the flight of his clerk sooner than by the post which brings you this ; but I have no apprehensions on that head, I confess, as the *secret* is between you, me, and himself, and for the rest he will not think of flight. Be wary, however, for our all depends on his not escaping."

It was just after Miss Wilton had finished the perusal of this agreeable morceau, that she heard from her vidette that Tracey was in the house. The few minutes which he spent with Lady Rosa and Hubert she occupied in endeavouring to control her terror and agitation at the thoughts of what would be the consequence of her brother's discovery of her deed, should Lord Lisbrian succeed in escaping; and, by the time that Celine conducted Tracey

to her room, she was able to meet him with tolerable composure.

After a few words exchanged on the subject of his opportune return—of the disastrous state in which he found the family—and a casual allusion to Mr. Rochford's having been disappointed by Lord Lisbrian's escape, as it were out of his very hands, to which Tracey unconsciously gave the confirmation of silence, from his utter ignorance of the attending circumstances—she abruptly asked, "And where is poor Lord Lisbrian at this moment, Mr. Tracey?"

But though Tracey might be easily deceived, he was not easily surprised out of the obvious path of duty or fidelity. After a moment's pause he said, "Oh, he's escaped, Ma'am, thanks be to God!"

"And to *you*, Mr. Tracey, I understand? But I asked you where he has escaped to? where is he at present?"

"Oh Lord, Ma'am! Sure you know I couldn't tell, even supposin' I knew?"

"By *could not* do you mean *would not*, Mr. Tracey? Let us understand each other at once. I wish to know whether you consider me as a friend of the family or not?"

"Oh, God in Heaven bless you, Miss Wilton, and don't look so angry at me! Faith you frighten

me, and I've nothing to spare of fright already ! A friend to the family ? to be sure ; what would you be, if you were not a friend to the family, after all that's come and gone ? But indeed, indeed, Miss Wilton, I don't think it would be right in me for no rason to tell where my Lord is gone, to any one, supposin' I knew. It ever and always seemed quare to me how any one thinks they have a right to tell a sacret for any likin' of their own, without the lave of the person it belongs to—"

" Then leave my room, if you please, Sir !" was the rejoinder ; for Miss Wilton saw that further parley with him were but waste of time, and she did not feel that she could trust her temper a moment longer. Tracey did not wait for a second order, but, escaping as fast as his legs could carry him, Celine, who was instantly despatched to watch what direction he took, returned breathless, in a few minutes, declaring he was already nowhere to be seen.

He had, indeed, not lost a minute in plunging into the grove, and regaining his place beside his Lord, where, after a few deep groans over the "quareness of women," and the admission that, "at last, he believed what he had often doubted before, that they bet Banagher," he communicated the result of his mission ; and as he had learned, in the course of it, that the law officers had not yet

searched the castle—so that Lord Lisbrian must not venture thither—but had probably gone in the first instance to his house in pursuit of him—“and so,” as he said, “would be come and gone by that time”—he besought Lord Lisbrian to lose no time in rolling himself up in the billiard-table cover, and accompanying him in an “elegant short cut” across the fields to his house, where he should be provided, if necessary, with a peasant’s suit, either to proceed next morning on his journey, or to remain concealed, according as he might determine on in the course of the night; and as, in the utter paralyzation of Lord Lisbrian’s faculties, he could think of no better plan, his suggestion was adopted, and they set out for his house, and arrived there without interruption.

Miss Wilton, in the meantime, on Tracey’s leaving the room, sat down resolved to do something in order to emancipate herself from the predicament she was in, and only had to consider what that something possibly could be. It was in casting about her, in every direction, for this purpose, that the extraordinary obsequiousness, and rhapsodical professions of devotion of the parish schoolmaster—between whom and herself there was an odd sort of acquaintanceship established, of which she was far from imagining the effect on him—presented themselves to her mind as materials that might be

worked into the instrument she required. His pomposity and self-conceit indeed formed a counterpoise ; but, as in the case of the votes, she had learned to overcome them, she did not apprehend being less successful now ; and, accordingly, penning such a note as she thought calculated to flatter them through the medium of his crazy imagination, she sent for “ Peggy of the Castle,” and, intimating that it was a matter of importance to the family, desired that it might be despatched without a moment’s delay.

Peggy readily undertook the commission—only thinking to herself, as she went down stairs, that they were “ quare times when Billy Bartley was to repair the mischief that Misther Rochford had done !”

A few minutes after Miss Wilton had despatched her note, her sister came to seek her, in order to experience some reflected sensations from her upon events which she had just sense and feeling enough to know were calculated to waken them. But so oppressive were her cool, undisturbed countenance, tone, and manner, to her whose soul was wrought up to the highest degree of tension with anxieties of which she durst neither disclose the source nor the extent, that, turning from her in uncontrollable disgust, Miss Wilton said, “ Come down, come down, Susan ; it is no

time to talk the matter over now. It is high time we should inquire whether we may be permitted to see Rosa."

"Is it possible you have not done that already?" was the natural rejoinder.

"It is more than possible—it is true!" Miss Wilton answered, petulantly.

"Then I have shewn more feeling for her than you have, after all!" Susan said, half sneeringly, half simply; "for I sent, but she was engaged, and could not see me."

"Lest your stock should be exhausted, then, by so unusual an exertion, let me give you a hint that you may require it for yourself sooner than you think!"

But Susan only sneered again, and this time so decidedly, that her sister inquired the meaning of it.

"Nothing," she replied, evasively; "but to see what has come of all Charles's and your wise schemes and speculations, and who will prove fool after all!"

"Come down, come down, idiot!" muttered her sister, and disregarded another sneer no less triumphant than the last.

When they entered the drawing-room, they found there only Lady St. Clair and the Marquis of Halimore—the remainder of the guests having taken

their departure in any way they could when the last blow fell on the seemingly devoted family—and they seemed so much occupied with themselves and with each other, that it was some time before they became aware that they were no longer alone in the room.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN the first rumour of the flight, or, as it was called, the arrest of Lord Lisbrian, reached the dining-room, and dispersed the company, Lord Halimore immediately went in search of Lady St. Clair as of an oracle, entreating her to inform him what it was all about.

Assuming at once the character he thus assigned her, she withdrew into the embrasure of a window, whither he, of course, followed her, and, shaking her head in a very portentous manner, "I fear matters are all gone wrong," she said. "I wish we had all done as the others did, and left the house this morning; for I am very much afraid we have only remained to distress and annoy our friends, by witnessing such a denouement. I hear he has escaped?"

"Yes, so I hear," Lord Halimore replied. "But what from ? or what has caused it all ? I suppose it is but temporary ? Where is poor Lady Rosa ? It's very awkward that L'Estrange should be ill at this time ! Have you seen Lady Rosa ?"

"No, certainly not ; you know she was called out first ; and as she has not appeared since, I did not think it would be right to intrude upon her."

"Poor thing ! I wish from my soul one could do anything for her. I wonder where she is ?—in L'Estrange's room I dare say."

"There is no doubt, my Lord, that one, and many a one, could be of use to her,—your lordship amongst the rest."

"How ? how ? for I really should be very glad."

"Merely, then, by laying your coronet at her feet ; and as soon as you become the son of the bankrupt banker, you may pay all his debts, and I'm sure Lady Rosa will feel very much obliged to you ; and even, through gratitude, consent to pass the rest of her life with you and her father in Van Dieman's Land, or any other exile that may suit your remaining finances, while every Methodist throughout the three kingdoms, as they here call England, Ireland, and Scotland, will pronounce you a dutiful son-in-law, and, perhaps, send you some tracts by which to test your *motives*, and to

teach you how to found Evangelical Schools on the most approved plan abroad !”

“No! no! that’s a little too much!” he answered, colouring, and wincing from the ridicule. “I only mean if one could give her any support or comfort; she must be fretting, poor thing, and frightened?”

“If you are still consulting me, my Lord,” she answered drily, “I have but the same answer to give,—namely, that there is but one kind of support or comfort a young man can offer to a young lady under such circumstances which her brother cannot give. If you are prepared to offer that, I have told you the conditions, and shall be most happy to be your messenger on the occasion,—say the word !”

“Her brother? ay, Hubert? Yes, true; I almost forgot him! I know L’Estrange so much better; but to be sure Hubert is with her,” he said, looking round the room. “And, as you observe, he can say all that is right to her about it all; still, if any real accommodation could be procured by a slight sacrifice—”

“Besides,” interrupted Lady St. Clair, affecting not to hear the latter part of his sentence, “I shrewdly suspect she has other support still more acceptable.”

“How do you mean?—who? I miss nobody

else," said his Lordship, again glancing round the room."

"Because you have been accustomed to his absence for some days—nevertheless he has been here within this hour. It was to him she was called out and, for aught I know, she is closeted with him still."

"But who is he? None of the boors about here?"

"No; but what do you think of the Methodist parson?"

"What, Rochford? Pooh! she does not think of him! I never saw a symptom of it; indeed it never occurred to me. You don't mean that there is any thing tender between them?"

Lady St. Clair smiled a very pretty arch smile, and, after a moment's pause, said, "*I myself am no judge of these matters, but I know that those who are think that there is a great deal understood between them, under all that apparent coolness.*"

Lord Halimore felt the colour again rising to his face. He was not vain—nor was he perhaps capable of being very seriously in love—but he knew that L'Estrange had wished he should be, and that he had himself almost intimated to the lady that he was so; and this, with the reception he had met with from women in his short career, was sufficient to make him feel himself insulted now. He felt it,

however, without bitterness or resentment, and merely as a matter to make him a little ridiculous, were it known, and, consequently, to be ashamed of; yet was he so good-natured, that if, at the moment, any one had pointed out to him how he could, "by a slight sacrifice," as he said himself, serve Lady Rosa, he would have done so; but there was no one to point out to him the means, and he knew them not himself.

Lady St. Clair spied the blush, and was too well skilled in human nature not to guess the cause of it. After a silence of sufficient length to suffer him to "chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancies," she said, suddenly, "I set out in the morning for London; can I carry any commands for your lordship?"

His Lordship started. "To-morrow! to London! so soon! Is your servant returned?" he asked.

"No; but I must sacrifice my own personal comfort to that of my poor friend. I cannot possibly think of trespassing longer on her at such a time."

"Will she, then, be left quite alone?"

"Again, you forget her brother, my Lord!" she said, a little pettishly. "But, besides him, the Miss Wiltons remain; and—I suppose I may add, Lord Halimore."

"Oh, no! certainly not I. It would be very absurd in me to stay if you think you ought not."

“ Unless—remember Van Dieman’s Land—the schools, and the prayers of the Methodists—”

“ No, no, nonsense ! But I say, Lady St. Clair—besides,” he added, interrupting himself, “ she would not, probably, have me if I offered myself, from what you say of Rochford.”

“ Nay, nay ; you misunderstand me. Now, I am sure she would ; for Rochford certainly could not pay her father’s debts !”

“ Oh, damn it ! I beg your pardon !—but if that be all, you can’t think me such a noodle as to marry her merely for that purpose ? So, as I was going to say, as you are going to London, had you not better take one of my men to attend you ? I have two postilions here, as L’Estrange would have me bring my new carriage horses—they will do for me, and do you take my own man with you.”

“ Nay, my dear Lord Halimore, I’m really very much obliged to you, but that would not do at all ; I should be more afraid of the certainty of your strange servant, without his master to control him, than of the chance of banditti by the way.”

“ Oh, as to banditti, that’s out of the question, and Le Maire is an excellent fellow. However, your fears are everything ;—stay then,—what can we do ? Suppose we set out about the same time, and keep near each other along the road,—would that do ? I could then manage for you.”

“ My dear Lord Halimore ! you really are most exceedingly kind. I really don’t know how to express—in short—but I suppose,” she added, suddenly, changing her tone of feeling into one of playfulness ; “ but I suppose it is respect, and pity, and all that, for an old woman ? ”

“ Old woman ! nay, nonsense ! I really don’t know how you have conjured up that idea and forced it upon me ; I’m sure you don’t look eighteen this moment. I never saw you look so young as to-day at dinner, and ever since. Why did you always wear a cap or turban until to-day ? ”

Lady St. Clair really blushed a natural blush at this simple question. She quickly rallied, however, and, turning her blush to good account, she said, with an air of the most pleading candour and simplicity, “ I will tell you the truth. They tell me that my style of—what shall I call it ?—good looks—appears to most advantage in a cap or head-dress, of some kind ; and though I know they always have the effect of making one look older, to confess the truth, I thought—until this morning—I thought I could afford it.”

“ And you put them off for me ? ” he asked, rather answering to her eyes, which pointed her meaning, than to her words. Again she looked as if she blushed, and as Lord Halimore was young enough to believe she must be the best judge of whether she

did or not, he blushed from sympathy, and remained in an embarrassed silence. The lady did not think it advisable to let the embarrassment die a natural death—things that do can seldom be turned to much account—affecting, therefore, an effort herself, she said, “Come, my Lord! listen to me—I’m going to give you a rule to guide you in future. It is this—old women and very young women wear caps and turbans; the former to hide the effects of time, the latter to shew they do not fear them—but a woman *un peu passée* never ventures on such a step; at least, except those few, the insides of whose heads are better than the outsides—but, as a general rule, they never do. When we feel a point to be doubtful, we become doubly anxious to establish it. And the very fear of any one thinking a cap suitable to them makes nine women out of ten avoid them. Thus it is, that, while you see lovely creatures of sixteen and seventeen, blooming and blushing in peach-coloured ribbons and blonde at breakfast, you will see their aunts of some twenty years longer standing, figuring in uncovered bows and plaits, which I always look on as placards, to say, ‘You see I am *not* grey yet, for all your vile suspicions!’”

Lord Halimore laughed, and promised to profit by the advice; adding, however, that he did not think he should stand in need of it for the future.

But before Lady St. Clair could open her pretty eyes wide enough, or venture to ask in words, the meaning of the declaration, to which his look and manner gave point, the two Miss Wiltons came up to them, in great excitement, to talk, as they said, about all that had happened, and to consult with Lady St. Clair on the propriety of requesting to see Lady Rosa. Lady St. Clair now agreed that it ought to be done; and a message was accordingly despatched to that effect. The answer, however, was, that Lady Rosa feeling much indisposed, entreated to be excused from seeing any one that evening; but hoped that Miss Wilton would oblige her by making herself and the rest of the company as comfortable as circumstances admitted of.

“Now, you see, Lord Halimore!” Lady St. Clair whispered, triumphantly, as the Miss Wiltons moved away. “Poor soul! I knew by my own feelings what hers must be. I only wish to heaven it had been possible for me to have gone even one stage of my journey this evening, to relieve her mind even so far.”

“To-night!” exclaimed Lord Halimore, looking out. “You don’t mean at this hour?”

“Indeed I do. I should not shrink from ten or twelve miles drive in a lovely summer’s night, to relieve a friend under such circumstances.”

“Oh, nor I either, I’m sure, if it really ought to

be done; and I'm sure you are the best judge. But, then, you know there are no horses to be had."

"No. That's the very thing that I am lamenting," she said; and as she said it there was something in her tone that made Lord Halimore look in her face—and, after puzzling for a moment, he said, suddenly—

"Yes, to be sure, there are mine. Take mine, and send them back, and they will be ready to take me on to-morrow."

She darted a glance of something approaching to indignation at him; but subduing it into a sneer, she said, "Oh no, my Lord! that would be rather *too* pointed, for me to be the *only* one to leave the house! but, to speak plainly, I do not mean so much that any *one* person's going signifies, as that as many as possibly could should go."

"But it seems to me utterly impossible that you and I can both go? Perhaps you mean that I ought to go alone? No! I see it is not that either—besides, to be sure, that would leave you without the accommodation I offered you. Oh! how stupid I am!" he exclaimed, suddenly altering his tone. "To be sure, I see it all now! I'll ring the bell, and give orders this moment."

And in his joy at solving the riddle, he was hastening to do so, when Lady St. Clair, not think-

ing he was to be trusted implicitly, laid her hand on his arm, and asked what new idea had occurred to him.

“Of course to have my leaders put to your chaise, and make the wheelers draw my britzska! How stupid I was not to think of it! We can get harness here of course, and it won’t be a bit too much for them.”

And as Lady St. Clair’s pressure on his arm become softer, and her smile sweeter, while he spoke, he hurried out of the room to give orders accordingly.

While Lord Halimore was absent, Lady St. Clair moved towards a table, on which lay writing materials, and having composed an exceedingly pretty note to Lady Rosa, expressive of the most affectionate sympathy and delicate consideration, which latter alone, it would appear, induced her to bid her farewell at such a moment, she approached the Miss Wiltons, who were still talking together in another part of the room, and committing the note to their charge, informed them of her determination. Nothing could exceed their astonishment; and it required all their politeness and self-command, together with knowing how little their opinions would avail, to avoid betraying their consciousness of the real motives of her conduct; but merely alluding to their own long intimacy and

friendship with Lady Rosa as an excuse for their keeping their place, they accepted her parting compliments; and in about an hour afterwards, she, followed by Lord Halimore, was on her way to London.

CHAPTER V.

It was about five minutes before Lady St. Clair set out upon her moonlight excursion that Miss Wilton was summoned from the drawing-room; and outside the door she found Celine, who, with much appearance of prudential mystery, informed her that the person she expected was arrived, and waiting for her in the shrubbery. Hastening to her room on this intelligence, without losing a moment's time, she enveloped herself completely in a large cloak, and desiring Celine to go forward, as a sort of pioneer, to ascertain that she could pass without observation, she followed her with noiseless step, and presently found herself in the presence of Bartley.

He had been, in the meantime, pacing up and down the walk, perfectly bewildered in astonishment at his own good fortune, and wondering which

it was—his superfine speeches, or his superfine cloth—that had brought the young lady to this “pass.”

The moment he perceived her, he hurried forward with a movement very unlike his usual poker-like deportment, and immediately commenced a rhapsody, which, even in her preoccupied state of mind, did not fail to strike her as more direct, more individual, more intelligible, in short, than any of the quotations from grammars, spelling-books, or copy-pieces, which he had hitherto occasionally repeated to her, with a face so rueful, and efforts so laborious, as conveyed to her no other idea than that he was rehearsing tasks for the edification of his pupils. At another moment she might have, perhaps, left him in displeasure or contempt; but having now, as too often before, placed herself in a situation where she could not afford to listen to any good or proper feeling that might occur to her, she was obliged to content herself with saying—“Come, come, Mr. Bartley! that’s all very nice and amusing indeed; and, as my note may have shewn you, I quite agree in all you say about beauty, and the moon, and so forth——”

“And *love*, Miss Wilton,—and *love*,” he solemnly broke in with, bowing at the same time, and

spreading his hand across his person, though he mistook the exact position of his heart.

“Very well; and love if you will have it so,” she went on; “but I have no time to talk of these things at present. I have sent for you on the most important matter—”

“And what, Miss Wilton, can be more important?” he again whined out.

“Oh, fifty things! Do pray listen to me. I wish to be quite serious for a moment. You have heard, of course, of all that has happened here; and of Lord Lisbrian’s shameful conduct?”

“Not a word, Ma’am!” he exclaimed, with eyes, ears, and mouth, suddenly distended, in astonishment—and the current of his thoughts completely arrested for the moment. But seeing the lady hesitate on finding him so uninformed, and fearful that, without encouragement, she might proceed no further, he added, in a tone from which surprise had banished all affectation, “I hard, indeed, some talk about somethin’ bein’ stolen from some of the Rochford family. Some said it was money from the sick owl man; some, that it was young Rochford’s watch; but I heerd nothin’ rightly, nor of any shameful conduct.”

“Have you not, then, heard that Lord Lisbrian has been obliged to fly?”

“ Oh, I did, Ma’am ! sure I did. Where’s the one for miles round but has heerd that hours ago ? but what was that but the bank smashin’ ? And sure, even so, it’s quare enough. But they’ll catch the fellow yet, or my name’s not Bartley ! Indeed, I knew he couldn’t have betther look, with his airs and his capers when he come over here ! ”

Delighted to find an ally so well disposed, as it appeared, to her cause, Miss Wilton now said—
“ I quite agree with you ; and that’s exactly the very thing I sent for you about. I’m perfectly satisfied that he is not many miles off this moment ; and I want you to set your wits to work, and find out for me exactly where he is, or what may be his plans.”

“ Whethen, maybe I could do that same asier than you think, and for rasons of my own too ; but still, and for all that’s come and gone, yet, and for all they did affront me, surely, betune them, I’m not going to give him up without knowin’ for what, or what you or Lord Lisbrian will give me to make it worth my while ! only this much I’ll tell you—to shew you how far you must depend on me—that he’s not to say not in the neighbourhood, but not within the four says of Ireland this minute ! ”

“ Why, who upon earth are you speaking of ? ”
Miss Wilton asked, with dismay, as soon as she could be heard.

“Of who am I spakin’?” he repeated, with sudden caution and cunning twinkling up into his eyes.

“Why who, then, are *you* talkin’ of Ma’am?”

“Of Lord Lisbrian, to be sure!” she answered at once, and most emphatically. “Of Lord Lisbrian, who has robbed not the Rochfords only, but hundreds and thousands of others!”

As these words saluted Bartley’s eager ears, it is scarcely too much to say that he sprang into the air, and again clapping both his hands upon his person, as if again seized with some “inward pain,” he exclaimed, “Why, blessed and holy Lord! this hour and day! you don’t mane the *Masther*?—the *Landlord*?—the *Lord* himself?”

“I do, indeed, Mr. Bartley,” she coolly answered.

“Whethen, Miss Wilton, may I be bould to ask,” he said, forgetting all his high aspirings, for the moment, in hereditary feeling, “what you ever seen or hard tell of in me that makes you think I’d turn *informer*?”

Miss Wilton was ignorant of the technical meaning of the term *informer*, or at least of the degree of odium attached to it in some, perhaps in all parts, more or less, of Ireland,—she was ignorant that a man may be a sinner of almost any dye—may be as pompous and disagreeable to his neighbours as Mr. Bartley himself, and yet be forgiven—but that he

who betrays trust, or makes himself the instrument to deliver any one up to the vengeance of the laws, is fortunate if he is only hooted from the neighbourhood he has disgraced. She was ignorant of this; and, therefore, instead of shrinking from the responsibility of the unintended insult, she only became more urgent; and, at last, finding nothing else likely to prevail, and something having dropped from Bartley which gave her reason to think he knew more than he had acknowledged, she had recourse to tears, and sobbed out, "Then my last hope is gone! On your kindness, Mr. Bartley, I depended—and I may now tell you, that every single shilling of my own fortune depends on my being able to find Lord Lisbrian while he is yet to be found!"

It would, perhaps, be difficult to define what feeling or instinct suggested to the young lady to urge this plea at this moment. But, whatever it might be, it had the effect of turning the mind of him to whom it was addressed, once more, into the channel in which it ran at the commencement of this strange interview—in which, in fact, it had occasionally run almost from their first meeting. He remained a moment silent; and then, when she removed her handkerchief to see what effect her words or her tears had produced, he peered into her face with eyes to which a faint gleam of imaginative power,

struggling with low, dull, sordid cunning, gave an expression peculiarly odd and unpleasant.

“Whethen, do you tell me *that*, you elegant, beautiful crachur?” he exclaimed at last; and although he advanced a step nearer to her as he spoke, she did not venture to draw back. Encouraged by this forbearance—and glancing over in his mind the power he now had over her—suddenly, and without appearing to move a muscle of his limbs or body, he flopped down upon his knees before her! she started at the noise and the suddenness of the motion, but he seized hold of her cloak, exclaiming, “Never fear! never fear! loveliest of human crachurs! I’m not hurt! But see! here, on my two bended knees, I offer myself up to you, Miss Wilton, body and soul, if so be that you can condiscind to bring yourself to accipt the boon!”

Accustomed to the most high-flown and figurative compliments from this extraordinary being, and not for a moment surmising the possibility of his “*proposing for her*,” Miss Wilton, still unaffectedly mistaking his meaning, and deeming it prudent to humour him, replied with great animation, “Oh very well, then! remember now, Mr. Bartley, that you have vowed yourself to me, body and soul, and, therefore, as true knight, I command you to do my behest, and forthwith give me the information I require!”

“ Then you do consint, jewel and darlin—I mane, bright lady fair,—you do accept my vows ?”

“ Yes, but on the one condition that you can and do inform me truly where Lord Lisbrian is gone to !”

“ Then, you’re mine ! and, by the powers—I mane by this ‘chaste cold moon’—I’m yours ! for he’s this minute in Misther Thracey’s house ; and how do I know, but that when I got your lovely note, biddin’ me come with caution and without observation—them was your handsome words—I stole out be a back lane, and across the bog, and so on through the fields, and what should I see, meet-in’ me, but a man an’ a ghost as I thought—the man I knew in a jiffy to be Thracey, he’s such a snail of a small crachur—but the other I didn’t know at first, for it was rowled up in a green blanket—but still I thought it had a lordly walk with it. Well ! I crep’ on, and slunk into a ditch, and they never felt* me, though they passed me by as close as I am to you now, and faith, sure enough, did I hear the Lord’s English tongue, lamenting like to Thracey for fear of bringing him into throuble, even for the one night’s lodgings ; so I said nothing, but came my way fair and asy, never dhramin’ of molestin’ them, but hid on account of your caution, and now

* Perceived me.

what'll you give me," he said, with an air of revolt-ingly vulgar familiarity, "for my news?"

"Give you!" she repeated. "Have I not sufficiently rewarded you in permitting you to vow yourself my knight? Kneel down again!" She added, in order to divert his mind from the pecuniary reward to which she supposed he alluded, and which it would have been particularly inconvenient to her just then to have given, "Kneel down! and I'll dub you my true knight in legal form." He knelt down as she desired, but still with a frightful expression of low and impudent flirtation. She probably did not allow herself to perceive it, but, tapping him lightly on the cheek with her gloved hand, said, "Rise! Sir William Bartley! knight of the moon and birch rod!"

The moment he felt the tap he sprang from his knees, and exclaiming, "*That's* a fair challenge at any rate, all the world over!" He was about to claim the reward to which he had alluded, and which he had always heard should seal such compacts as that he believed he had entered into that evening, when the lady, for the first time becoming aware of his meaning, started back with a look and gesture he did not dare to make light of—and, in the haughtiest tone which the most irreproachable and consistently dignified person could assume under similar circumstances, she said—

“Have you lost any stray glimpses of reason you ever had, you most impertinent wretch, to presume thus on my condescension? Begone from hence this moment, or I shall have you horsewhipped by the servants!” And she returned to the house in a paroxysm of unaffected rage.

By the time she had thrown off her cloak, however, even this emotion yielded to the more pressing exigencies of the moment; and seizing a pen, she wrote “The same hand that was stretched out in your behalf already, once again assumes the office to inform you that him you seek is at this moment hiding in his agent’s house.” And this time venturing to address it to Rochford himself, she once more summoned Peggy, and informed her that it was absolutely necessary the note should be that moment despatched by the fleetest horse and surest messenger to Still-Organ Abbey. Peggy, though bewildered by this parley with the enemy, of course undertook to have the order obeyed, saying, there was one below would ride “to the devil and back again,” without stopping, for his lordship; and her friend Brian was forthwith despatched upon the mission.

And now it was that Miss Wilton felt herself at last really successful, and sat down to enjoy one moment of exquisite, unalloyed felicity. Nor let moralists start at earthly felicity being acknowledged to be sometimes the consequence of crime!

For, besides the indisputable maxim that truth never should be violated, it appears to me that those who are only deterred from guilt by the fear of their own sensations will, by degrees, learn to trust their nerves ; while to those who are yet wavering, from better feeling, it must surely be the most fearful of all truths that their guardian angel, conscience, if trifled with too long, or tried too far, will abandon them at last, to fight their battles as they can, unsupported and alone ! But whatever might have been the sensations of Miss Wilton, Bartley no longer sympathized, or fancied that he sympathized, in them. He stood still and silent for a few minutes, livid and foaming with rage, disappointment, and humiliation, rendered doubly difficult to endure, because he had brought a witness to enjoy his triumph, whom he now fancied, in his curdling soul, was indulging in a hearty laugh at his discomfiture behind the trees. This, at all events, he determined should not last.

“Come here, this very instant moment, Joe Murphy !” he called out. “I’ll be bound you’re titherin’ there fit to brake your foolish heart at what you don’t undherstand a word of ! How would *you*, or the likes of you, undherstand the capers of ladies when they’re a coortin’ ? but it’s no use in talking,” he exclaimed, as he perceived Joe Murphy to be in any rather than a laughing mood ; “it’s no

use in talkin' or pretindin' to a lad like you ! She's a born divil, Joe ! and I'll have my rivinge of her proud heart, if I swung for it next day !" And Joe being by this time close to him, he asked what made him look so pale.

" Oh, Misther Bartley ! Misther Bartley !" poor Joe replied, " did I ever think to see the day that you'd bethray the Lord ! Assure as ever you're there, this minute, and that lady is agin him ! and will give him up to the thieves of bailiffs,—and how will it be with you then ? or how will you ever face the counthry, and that iligant Lady Rosa, and all ? O Lord, O Lord ! this night !" And poor Joe wrung his hands in anguish ; for though no two characters could be more opposite than were his and that of his preceptor, the bond of "learning" was between them, and gave Joe, at least, an interest in him from whom he had imbibed his store.

Mr. Bartley's conscience began to take the alarm. " I b'lieve, in my heart, you're right, Joe, and that I done very wrong !" he said, nervously. " Well, sure I'm not the first man that love led asthray ! My curse upon her this night, and every night she lies down or rises ! But never heed, Joe," he said, suddenly brightening up ; " I have the manes to spite her to the very heart, and to do him a good turn at the same time ! I have a little sacret that

'id make amends for all that's come and gone yet, and I'll tell it to him before I sleep."

"No sacret can make amends if he's took up," was Joe's rejoinder. "And the only amends you can make is, to come off this very moment to Mистер Thracey's house, and tell them what you've done." But this was an effort of generosity far above Bartley's calibre. He not only flatly refused, but swore he would murder Joe on the spot, if he attempted it himself; and, at last, they came to a compromise, that Mr. Bartley was to write a note, signed by some feigned name, which Joe was to despatch by some third person, who was to be called out of his sleep, to take it to Mr. Tracey, informing him that Lord Lisbrian's hiding-place was known to the enemy.

Joe groaned in spirit at the prospect of delay all these preliminary steps held out; but, unused to disobey his teacher, and, perhaps, a little unwilling to run the risk of betraying him, he felt himself compelled to acquiesce—only venturing with a face of doleful solemnity, to implore—"Now, Mистер Bartley, jewel and darlin', don't mind any thropes and metaphurs that id keep you too long, bud jest say the word plain and short." Before Bartley had time to answer, the dashing of horses' feet were heard, and it was only by their both rushing out to-

gether to see what it could be that they forced the rider to draw up.

“The grass ’ll not grow undher your horse’s feet, at any rate, ma bouchall! Whethen, where are you going at that rate, Bri’n?” asked Bartley.

“Let me pass! I’m goin’ with a letther in all haste from Miss Wilton to Misther Rochford, Somethin’ he’s to do for the Lord. Let me pass!” Brian answered; and, without waiting for a word more, he dashed between them, and was in an instant past recall.

“Wheugh!” whistled Bartley; “that must go into the note along with the rest! Come along, Joe; it’s time I was beginnin.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE letter which Miss Wilton despatched to Rochford was duly delivered to him at Still-Organ Abbey, where he was spending the night in fruitless endeavours to pacify his father, whose consternation and fury, on hearing of the escape of Lord Lisbrian, seemed to place either his life or reason in the most imminent peril they had ever yet sustained. He cursed the world; he cursed mankind in general; and he did all but curse him whom he repeatedly accused as the origin of it all. He refused to seek repose, or to let food pass his lips; and had hitherto spent the night in walking from the windows to the hall-door, and listening for the faintest sounds that might indicate the return of the messenger whom he had despatched to request the immediate presence of Mr. Blake, a justice of peace,

on whose zeal in his cause he knew he could depend—with such legal instruments as might be necessary for the immediate apprehension of a nobleman on a capital charge; and whose unaccountable delay in obeying which summons, together with the messenger not returning, had nearly worked him into frenzy.

It was in the midst of this scene of misery and madness that Miss Wilton's messenger arrived. Lord Still-Organ was himself the first to meet him and snatch the letter from his hands; and it was only by Rochford's having closely followed him, and repeating, gently, but decisively, "Nay, my dear father, he says the letter is for me!" that he was restrained from tearing it open, and devouring the contents. Rochford had the precaution to withdraw for the perusal, and it was fortunate that he did so; for, besides that the surprise and disgust he felt at being suspected capable of acting the part attributed to him by one who must have known his feelings towards the afflicted family so well as the writer might have hurried him into a betrayal of the information thus thrust upon him, it gave him time to deliberate as to what use he could make of it that would serve all parties most effectually. A very few minutes sufficed for this, where the path of rectitude was so clear before him.

He returned to his father—and without waiting

to be questioned, he said at once, "Father, I have received information as to where Lord Lisbrian is concealed at this moment, and I sincerely believe it is a place that, having been already searched, he can readily escape from, in the morning, in whatever direction he may choose;—nay, hear me patiently, Sir, if you would profit by my information. Now, my dear father, I do beseech you to hear me patiently! for, though, I trust, you know me incapable of treating you with less than becoming respect, you also know me to be inflexible—you will say obstinate—in what I believe to be my duty. Every circumstance that has occurred respecting this unhappy business, only tends more and more to convince me of Lord Lisbrian's utter incapability of the slightest dishonesty of intention; so much so that I feel no doubt he will not long survive the publicity of the imputation—if you persist in making it public—and that thus the money, which otherwise you have no reason to despair of recovering, will indeed be, every penny, lost in the ruin that must ensue."

"Well, Sir, well?" was all the old man trusted himself to utter in reply, exhorted as he was to patience under such penalties.

"On the other hand, my dear father, if Lord Lisbrian were permitted to retrieve his affairs—"

"What! by my overlooking his conduct, and

not issuing the warrant?—ha ! ha ! ha ! I knew to what your sophistry was tending ! but before I do, may the curse I have prayed upon him and his——”

“ I stay not to hear a repetition of such language, Sir !” said his son, turning to leave the room with mingled sorrow and displeasure in his countenance ; “ and you may take your own measures as you best can, for I will not co-operate with one who answers reasons with blasphemy.”

Lord Still-Organ, though still trembling with impotent passion, could not resist a sensation of awe, at seeing his gentle-tempered son roused to reproaches ; besides which he felt a certain, though unacknowledged, consciousness that, without his assistance, he should be indeed like a reed cast upon the waters of strife ; and by the time that Rochford had reached the door, in a sort of choaking, sullen voice, he said—

“ What stuff is this, Gerald ? Is this what you call respect, Sir ? to catch up every idle word of your old father’s, who is driven almost out of his senses through your means ?”

“ We will not again dispute that point, my dear father !” said his son with a smile, and instantly returning ; “ it signifies little what the means were—the end is what we have now to look to ; and see you not that, if I had anything less than your real

interest in view, I could, without having communicated the contents of this letter to you, have put Lord Lisbrian on his guard against the fact of his retreat being known."

"No!" Lord Still-Organ said, sarcastically; "even your own cold principles would prevent such an act as that!"

"And, if they are thus sincere, Sir, would they not equally prevent me from endeavouring to persuade you to do that which I believed would be disadvantageous to you? But I assure you, Sir, you far outrun me in what I was about to suggest."

"What was it, then, in God's name?" asked his father, "for I see but the two courses."

"There is a medium one, Sir; but before I make my proposal, I must beg you to bear in mind before you reject it,—and try to do so without displeasure, my dear father—that, I pledge my word and honour, as a man and a clergyman, that no reproaches, no prayers, shall induce me to assist you in apprehending Lord Lisbrian on this charge, and at this moment, to the utter ruin of himself and his amiable and innocent family; and that, to avoid all such importunity, I shall leave the country on the very instant of your refusal; further than this, however, I will not act against you; I should not think myself justified in doing so. You see, my dear father, I wish to deceive you in nothing."

“ Well, Sir, to your proposal ! I have heard your preface with, I hope, becoming patience.”

“ You have, Sir, and I thank you for it, and augur well from it. My proposal, then, is this, that instead of precipitating this unfortunate man to ruin and desperation, without notice, warning, or opportunity for explanation, or restitution, you would not issue your warrant for the short space of three days, on condition of his promise, in whatever form will satisfy you, that at the end of that time he will either pay the sum of money due to you, or deliver himself into your hands to abide the penalty.”

“ And have you an idea he would accept it on such terms, if, as you say, he has it now in his power to escape ? You see, Sir, you are caught in your own snare !”

“ I am convinced he would,” Rochford said. “ I will pledge myself, without hesitation, for his keeping his word.”

“ But why should he give himself up, if he has escaped ? What would he gain by it ? but lose everything.”

“ I trust his affairs are by no means so desperate as you think ; although, from his own heedlessness and the dishonesty of his head-clerk, they have fallen into confusion, which may be easily precipitated into ruin,—then, his temper is sanguine, and by what I propose, he would see that he had time to look

about him, and, perhaps, make some arrangement; and at all events, he would accept it, were it only to pay the last rites to his eldest son, who now lies a corpse in his house."

"Yes! that is another plausible story to work on my feelings."

"I do not think, Sir, the course I have held with you throughout this business renders that even probable. I knew Lord L'Estrange was dangerously ill when I returned here this evening, and I did not mention it. The messenger who brought this letter informs me that he expired exactly as he left the house; and your friend Mr. Clarendon, who was sent for this morning, will arrive too late."

"Ha! indeed? Clarendon coming to the neighbourhood! that is the best news I have heard yet," said the valetudinarian, "these agitations cannot but do me harm! indeed, I feel already that they have—and it is a long time since he and Dr. Sandes have consulted together—so, above all things, don't let him go away without my seeing him, Gerald! and, as to this proposal, it is plausible in some points, I must confess, and if I were quite sure there were no chance of catching him otherwise——"

"And so ruining him and yourself together?" said Rochford, while he hesitated.

"Ay, it might, indeed, be so; such things have happened before now. I wish to God I had taken

your advice at first, Gerald, and communicated with him before I took this step ! But, you see, you were not to be trusted—infatuated as you are about this family. However, now as I can do no better, I have a mind to try your advice for this once ; and it seems, indeed, as if the fates were against me,—for, just as you withdrew to read your note, my stupid brute of a fellow returned with the letter I had sent to Mr. Blake, informing me that he was not at home ; but that as he had been expected every moment, he waited until the family had given him up for the night ; so I have the constables here for nothing ! But suppose I accede to your proposal, how shall I be able to negotiate with the fellow ?”

“ Trust that to me, Sir. I will go to him on your pledging your honour to me to adhere rigidly to your part of the conditions under all circumstances, and to make no attempt to find him out yourself.”

“ Oh, if I permit you to go on this errand, I will, of course, pledge myself to your word ; but, Gerald, you will, on your part, be true to your old father ? and you will not seek to marry the daughter of this bankrupt ?”

“ Lady Rosa L'Estrange has already refused me, Sir.”

“ Ha, what ?” the old man almost shrieked, “ how ? when ? Did you not promise me——”

“ I did, Sir ; and my keeping that promise should,

at least, have ensured me your confidence for ever after. I promised you to hold no communication with the family, until the answer should arrive from London. It was after that I proposed and was rejected."

"You madman!—you fool!—you idiot! I honour the girl for her spirit! And did her father know of it?"

"He did."

"Well?—well? And how did she escape from him?"

"He refused to interfere, even before I had a thought of asking him to do so."

"The devil he did!—eh? What then, Gerald? Do you know, it strikes me he cannot have thought himself in such very desperate circumstances, nor so utterly in my power, eh?—what do you think?"

"Just what I did before, my dear father—that he never thought of wronging you, nor being in any danger himself from any one."

"Why, then, in that case, Gerald, I don't know but what our safest course *might* be—eh?"

"Do, my dear Sir, make up your mind as quickly as possible; for, recollect, every moment, while it helps to ruin his character, adds to the chance of his escaping."

"Ay, that *is* to be considered! but as for his character, it would be a little too much to expect

me to consider *that*. Well, go then,—go in God's name, my son ! But remember, Gerald, you bind him in every possible way ; and that three days is to be the very utmost limit—as it shall be, so help me God !” Rochford was obliged to renew all the protestations and promises that he had already offered ; and, at last, the moment that the darkness began to yield to the first dawn of morning, he ordered his horse, and availing himself of one of those short ways across the country which are always to be had where neither cultivation nor fences are primary objects, he soon found himself within a short distance of Tracey's house, which, like so many in that dilapidated part of the country, was a small, but comfortable dwelling, built up amidst the ruins of what had once been a feudal castle, whose massive walls, both of house and garden, still told of luxury and grandeur passed away.

Presently, however, a ploughed field obliged him to strike out upon the high road ; and, almost immediately after, he perceived a man in the field which he had avoided, running, apparently, towards him from the house, whom, even in the imperfect light, he thought he could distinguish to be Tracey himself. Under this impression, he halloed out to him. The man, who had not, in his haste, perceived that any one was near him, started at the call ; and on looking up, and perceiving from whom it proceeded,

stopped short—and, by his silence and immovability, seemed suddenly converted into stone. Rochford, by this time convinced that it was Tracey, called out again—"Tracey! Why, I say Tracey!—come, on! What is the matter? Don't you know me? Make haste; I want you very much!" but still he received no answer—and, in a moment after, as he manifested symptoms of clearing the loose stone wall into the field, the apparition seemed to recover from its spell; and, wheeling suddenly round, fled back upon its track, as fast as two supple legs and the nature of the ground would admit of. Struck with astonishment at the strangeness of this conduct, Rochford paused for a moment to consider from whence it could proceed; when, suddenly, Miss Wilton's injurious suspicions, together with the circumstances of the arrest, and Tracey's exclamation on recognising him at the time, recurring to his recollection, he guessed the truth at once; and, ignorant of the note which Tracey had the moment before received from Bartley, in consequence of which he was that moment stealing off in search of some other asylum for his Lord, he felt a severe pang at finding how entirely his character and feelings had been misunderstood even by those whom he himself most esteemed.

Giving but a moment to this feeling, however, and recollecting that, although Lord Lisbrian him-

self could not possibly participate in the suspicion, Tracey might throw obstacles in the way of their meeting when time was so precious, he determined to try a race, by the road, against the fugitive in the field ; and, for this purpose, he spurred his good horse to its speed, every now and then catching glimpses of his antagonist, who, on his part, cast terrified glances towards him, and redoubled his pace after each. At last, it seemed to be what sportsmen call “neck and neck”—but just at that moment, instead of going about five yards further to a well-known gap, Tracey, in desperation, made a tremendous spring over a deep gripe, and, at the imminent risk of his neck, found himself a few yards before the horseman ; and applying a key to an old iron gate that hung in a wall on one side of the old-fashioned avenue, he let himself in, and hastily locking it again, finally disappeared. Rochford paused for a moment, not knowing whither this gate might lead—but, by Tracey’s having turned into it, and by his anxiety to lock it behind him, he could not doubt that it gave immediate access to Lord Lisbrian’s retreat, whatever it might be—and therefore, without further hesitation, and presuming at once upon his own and Tracey’s good intentions, he spurred his horse close up to the wall, and having looped the rein upon one of the spikes of the gate, he stood up in the saddle,—from thence

sprang to the top of the wall, and then was able to let himself down without difficulty.

He found himself in a very old-fashioned garden, of some extent; but which, from the elevated position he had just held, he had been able to take in at a glance. He saw that there were two persons in it besides himself; one, though in the dress of a peasant, seemed, nevertheless, to be indulging in the aristocratic privilege of idleness, and was pacing up and down the walk, with his arms crossed, decidedly "melancholy and gentlemanlike." The other was Tracey, who, after his late desperate race, seemed not a little glad to be able to take breath in assumed safety now, and was accordingly approaching the peasant-gentleman in a considerably slackened pace, when the noise of Rochford's descent from the wall causing him to look round, he uttered a dreadful yell, and—again accelerating his pace to its utmost speed—flew up to the seeming peasant, whose back was towards him, and, without the slightest notice or preparation, almost pouncing upon his shoulders in his anxiety, he cried out—"Stoop, stoop, my Lord! For the love of God bury your face in that bunch of nettles! and let me be batin' you for bein' idle! O Lord! my Lord, don't turn round on me now! just say I may bate you! it's our only chance! say the word, my Lord, or I'll have to do it without your lave!" and then, seeing Rochford approach-

ing, he waited for no further ceremony, and, if he did not actually strike his still respected master, he contrived to hustle his head backwards and forwards between his hands in such a manner as, for a moment, not only prevented Lord Lisbrian from remonstrating, but even from seeing what might be the cause of this assault.

It is not impossible that, had Tracey been a man of a temper and disposition less universally and uniformly mild and gentle than he was, this stratagem, from its very oddity, might have succeeded, and Rochford have passed on ; but, as it was, it only served to confirm his already wakened suspicions ; and, as Tracey now perceiving him at his side, with a dying effort redoubled his mock thumping, gasping out—" Take that you idle ——" but, overcome by his unconquerable feelings of respect, made a full stop there. Rochford seized his arm, and, looking full in his face with an expression of arch significance, said—" Well ! why do you hesitate ? Why don't you finish your sentence, and call him an idle, vagabond spalpeen ?" On hearing these words in his ear, Tracey uttered another yell, and, after glaring round upon him for one instant of stupified horror and amazement, he felt at once that his secret was discovered—his exertions fruitless—and, turning his head dolefully and pathetically sideways, first towards Lord Lisbrian, and then towards Rochford,

as if bespeaking their sympathy—he finally buried it between his hands, and absolutely burst into tears.

Lord Lisbrian, who even yet did not understand what all this meant, looked on amazed ; but Rochford, in the sincerity of the poor man's devotion to his inherited master, more than overlooking the suspicion of himself, again took hold of his arm, and shaking it encouragingly : “ Come, come, Tracey,” he said, “ this is going too far ! what is this childishness for ? Do you suppose I am going to change my profession of a clergyman for that of a bailiff ? ” And Tracey, all simple-minded and single-hearted as he was, being singularly gifted with that offspring of genuine feeling, *tact*, felt in a moment the truth, justice, and dignity of the rebuke, and lowering his hands from his face, all streaming as it was, as hastily as he had clapped them on it, he exclaimed : “ Whethen, this day and hour ! Mистер Rochford, can this be thrue ? and am I a weathercock all out ? or what on the face of this holy earth am I at all, at all, but what I ever was, and will be to my dyin' day, a new-born onshuch ! But what matther,” he said, suddenly recollecting himself ; “ what matther what *I* am ? but are you indeed, and afther all, my Lord's friend, Mистер Rochford ? and will I lave you together, my Lord ? ” he asked, turning to Lord Lisbrian.

“ Yes ; do leave us together, my good Tracey, for

a few minutes!" Rochford answered, "and, as I have no horse on this side the wall, if you lock the door behind you, your mind may be at ease."

"Oh, my God ! my God !" was poor Tracey's only, and desponding, answer, as, with a fresh accession of shame and self-reproach, he slunk out of the garden, taking care to leave the gate thrown back on its hinges, as a sort of delicate amende, while he hovered about at a little distance, to prevent intruders from entering.

CHAPTER VII.

As soon as Rochford and Lord Lisbrian were left alone, the latter made his proposal in the most delicate form which sympathy and Christian charity could dictate. To his utmost surprise, however, instead of evincing any joy at hearing, or readiness to avail himself of it, Lord Lisbrian heard him in gloomy silence, and only answered by a deep and despairing groan. He had spent the night in the garden-house; and, as he had positively prohibited Tracey from watching by him, he had had ample time, in solitude and darkness, to view his situation in all its horrors. The result was, a determination not to live a dishonoured man. Children, home, and friends, all occurred to him in succession; but they all only added to his determination, as he thought of the place he must henceforth hold in

their esteem ; and it is scarcely too much to say that Rochford's arrival arrested his hand almost in the impious act of freeing himself from the load of life.

When Rochford repeated his proposal, and besought him to collect his faculties, and answer, he shook his head and muttered, " It is too late, it is too late ! I thank you, Rochford—I do, indeed ; but it is too late." When induced to explain himself, " Rochford !" he said, " if, instead of the three days grace you offer me, you had the power to lay England at my feet, I would not accept it on condition of looking one of my children in the face again !"

" And what, then, do you propose to do ?" Rochford asked.

" To die !" was the reply. Rochford paused for a moment, at once horror-struck and unprepared for such a task as that which now appeared before him. Lord Lisbrian was the first to speak again. " Rochford, I know your sentiments and your principles," he said, " and I do not dispute them ; therefore spare me any repetition of them now. Let people say what they will, sudden conversions, in the hour of calamity, must be very rare. I can see and feel now that it must be the long habit of regulation of the mind and feelings that can weigh against the desire of freeing one-self from suffering, where there is no shrinking of the nerves.

Rochford, mine do not shrink ! and no arguments could make them. And now, farewell ; I would be alone !”

But Rochford moved not ; he could not, had he wished it, move. His hand was pressed tightly over his eyes, and his frame was shivering visibly with emotion. Lord Lisbrian was about to walk away. Rochford heard the slight noise, and hastily removing his hand from his pallid, agonized countenance, he laid it on Lord Lisbrian’s arm, and, arresting him by the movement, said, “ My Lord, there *is* an argument can shake your nerves,—your eldest son is this moment before his God,—will you meet him *there* ?”

Lord Lisbrian uttered a dreadful shriek, between agony and surprise.

“ It is but too true, my Lord,” Rochford repeated. “ A person sent to me with a note from Lisbrian Castle brought the news ;—he died as the man was leaving the house.”

“ Died ? *died* ?” Lord Lisbrian repeated. “ Oh ! Rochford, did you say my son *died* ?—No ! no ! I could *not* meet him *there* !”

Rochford could no longer control his emotion, and burst into violent sobbing, which, while it arrested his speech, had the happy effect of causing Lord Lisbrian’s tears also to gush forth—and the

stream, once loosed, flowed as if it must have washed away the bitterness of death itself. Rochford immediately took advantage of the softening influence, and putting his arm within his, drew him down upon a bench, and then ventured to remind him of the situation of his daughter.

“I see it! I see and feel it all, Rochford!” he said; and suddenly dropping on his knees, he asked for pardon, and gave thanks for being saved from the meditated crime, in the fervency of an humble and contrite heart.

“And now, my Lord,” Rochford said; “now that you have felt that there is no burden imposed which may not be borne, I may gratify myself by telling you that I believe your character is unblemished,—your secret, I have reason to believe, rests between my father and myself. Had the news of the stoppage of the bank and the flight of your clerk not come at the same moment this probably could not have been so; but as it did, and as an accidental circumstance prevented the magistrate from receiving my father’s note, requesting his professional assistance, until I had prevailed on him so far as I have mentioned, all that has transpired through common report is attributed solely to the mere failure of the bank, and I have, therefore, no hesitation in asserting that not Hubert himself has the slightest suspicion of the truth.”

“And why did you not tell me this at once, Rochford?”

“Because, my Lord, I wished not to lose sight of the substance for the shadow. I wished not to endanger your immortal soul in order to preserve your pride in earthly fame.”

“Then you would have suffered me to die, if my poor boy had not happened to die instead?”

“No, my Lord; God would have provided some other sacrifice. But, instead of curiously inquiring what might have been, let us be thankful for what has been.”

“I am, I am; you saw I was!” Lord Lisbrian said, hastily—for already the fervent, but unusual emotion had almost passed away, and even sorrow for the loss of his son seemed to have half evaporated in his tears. Rochford saw it would be injudicious to press him further at that moment, and endeavoured to lead him into some connected conversation on the subject of his worldly affairs.

It was with shame and self-condemnation that he now acknowledged that he knew little more of his own affairs than Rochford did himself. “I trusted all to my father’s old head-clerk,” he said; “and then Steen stepped into his shoes,—I don’t know how,—and from habit I trusted him the same way. Then I felt so confident of the value of this cursed estate,—at all events, the mere furniture would pay

your father—and if I left myself without a bed to lie on, I will pay him instantly, and prove to him, that, at least, I did not deserve the appearance the matter has assumed! I thought I was merely breaking through a form instituted only as a safeguard against dishonesty.”

Rochford gently reminded his afflicted friend that the excuse so often urged of innocence of intention is rather a point between God and man than between man and man, and that it is but little comfort to the injured person to be told that the conscience of his injurer is comparatively at rest! “And as to breaking a mere form of law,” he added, “all such forms, my dear Lord, are instituted, not so much with a view to public morals, as to public security; therefore, by whatever means that security is endangered, the penalty is equally incurred, and with equal justice.”

“Still, as you say yourself, Rochford,” Lord Lisbrian answered, “that the guilt or innocence of the intention is a consideration between God and man, I do not think that so great a temptation ought to have been put in my way in a weak moment.”

“Did you, my Lord, pray that day not to be led into temptation?” Rochford asked, in a peculiarly low and gentle tone.

“Pooh! Rochford!” Lord Lisbrian answered, somewhat hastily; “I’m not a child, to think it

necessary to utter a certain form of words every night and morning !”

“Then, at least, be consistent, my Lord,” he replied, still gently, but now permitting his eyes to meet Lord Lisbrian’s; “and if you think it childish to fulfil the condition that God imposed, do not reproach him for not fulfilling his part of the covenant; that, indeed, is like a sick child who expects to be saved by picking out the jam and rejecting the medicine.”

“Well, well; we’ll talk of these things some other time. Nay, don’t shake your head and look sorrowful ! for here’s my hand upon it, Rochford, that my heart has been more struck upon these subjects this day than it ever was in all my life before. And although, as I said, an old tree will not bear fruit the moment it is first watered, I can give you this much comfort, my dear, good, honest, sensible fellow, that you have sown the good seed in time; and although the pressure of my worldly affairs may seem to smother it just at present, I will see and not let it die, if it is only for your sake !”

And Rochford, not being one of those who reject the first step, if it be not a leap, wrung Lord Lisbrian’s hand, and was once more compelled to turn aside to conceal his emotion.

Lord Lisbrian asked how soon they might return to the castle.

“Instantly,” Rochford said. And Lord Lisbrian, only waiting to resume his own dress, borrowed a horse from Tracey, and accompanied, at his request, by Rochford, galloped there with the utmost speed.

Whatever might be his opinion, however, of the firmness of his nerves, either they, or some other physical power, had been too strongly tried that day ; for, no sooner did he alight from his horse at the door of his house, within which, he knew, lay the dead body of his son, than he fell, without sense or feeling, upon the steps, and was carried to his own room between Rochford and one of the postillions of a travelling chariot, which, with four foaming horses, had just moved to make way for them.

In a moment, of course, the rumour flew through the house that the Lord, once more caught by Mr. Rochford, had dropped dead at his own door ; and Mrs. Kelly, who being in Lady Rosa’s room, which was near Lord Lisbrian’s, was among the first to hear the bustle, and to rush forward to inquire what new calamity had happened, no sooner saw that he really was lying insensible, than she exclaimed—“ Well ; praise and glory be to God at all times, and in all sasons ! and it’s often when we think it laste, that we have most rason to say it ! Sure, I thought, under heaven, there was nothin’ wantin’ but for Lady Rosa to fall sick, as she did this mornin’

when she heard of her brother's death, to crown the misfortunes of this family,—and now to see what a blessin' has come out of it!—That only for it, Doctor Clarendon would have been far enough by this time! and now he is below, Misther Rochford, jewel, waiting till I could get Lady Rosa coaxed to let him see her."

Rochford waited for no further hint; but sending in a servant to summon Mr. Clarendon from the drawing-room—where Miss Wilton, in all the flippancy of successful plotting, was giving him her own version of the circumstances of the family—waited himself outside the door, to receive and conduct him to Lord Lisbrian's room.

"Why, God bless my soul! Rochford, is it *you*?" Mr. Clarendon exclaimed, as they met—at the same time holding out both hands to him. "Where in the world have you fallen from? or what has brought you here?"

Rochford hastily explained his situation in the parish.

"Yes, yes, to be sure; I know all that; but somehow I did not connect it at the moment with your sudden appearance here! But it is so delightful to meet a friend where you only expected a patient, especially in such an hospital as this house seems to be! Why, what a set they must be, to be sure! And what in the world can you be doing

amongst them? My fair friend in the drawing-room—by the way, who is she?—a prettyish, cleverish, youngish, livelyish sort of a person? Yes—well, Miss Wilton has given me a most amusing description of them; and she and I have just agreed that the bankrupt's daughter will be presented at the first drawing-room, with her bustle stuffed to the proper, or improper, dimensions, with her father's rejected bank-notes! But come! if he is really so ill, we must see what can be done to relieve him." And as at that moment they had arrived at Lord Lisbrian's door, Rochford was obliged to suspend his desire to correct the erroneous impression he saw his friend had received, not only while he restored Lord Lisbrian to life and recollection, but also while he visited and prescribed for Lady Rosa. At the end of that time, as is often the case, he found that he might have spared his anxiety upon the subject.

After waiting in the corridor for a length of time that must have exhausted the patience of any one less interested in their object, he, at last, saw Mr. Clarendon emerge from Lady Rosa's apartment, accompanied by Mrs. Kelly, who, as they walked along, seemed, by her good-natured face turned up towards him, bathed in tears, to be opening her heart to him with the confidence of long-established friendship; while he, with his arm

thrown affectionately round her shoulders, seemed to be attentively listening, with no less interest. She accompanied him only a few steps, however, and returned to her charge, while he advanced alone—and perceiving Rochford, immediately exclaimed—“Never, in all my life, Rochford, did I feel so angry with you and with myself as I do at this moment! Why, my dear fellow, how *could* you suffer me to run on in such a strain of such a creature? She is quite lovely! and altogether so dignified, gentle, and lady-like, that if she was not always an earl’s daughter, she deserved to be one. ’Pon my soul! I felt like a criminal in her presence, from a consciousness of my irreverence, and could scarcely keep from falling on my knees before her, and exclaiming—

‘The fool who came to scoff, remains to pray!’

Come, tell me how it was you suffered me to live a moment in such heresy?—a fellow of taste and feeling like you! Do you know you have only defeated your own object? for since it is impossible you *could* think so little of her, and, as extremes meet, it must be just the reverse, and you could not trust yourself to speak of her at all! Come! confess! Was not that it? It must be; for I defy any man to be domesticated with such a creature and not adore her! I never in my life, since my boyhood

at least, felt such a wish to vow myself true knight to any woman. I feel absolutely seized with a desire to serve her if it is possible—and it would not lessen my desire to know I was serving you at the same time. So, tell me, is it so?”

Although Rochford would have been glad to have deferred the acknowledgment of the state of his affections, for some time at least, feeling not only the impossibility of eluding Mr. Clarendon’s penetration when once attracted to the subject, but also some reluctance to making the attempt with so kind a friend, he frankly and briefly told him exactly what had taken place.

“Pooh! it was only some little coquetry, depend upon it,” Mr. Clarendon exclaimed, “and all will be right yet! But if I can trust to the dear, fat, mouldered brains of that poor woman that is attending her—and which seem stuffed so full of kindness and good nature, that there is no room for anything else in them,—the warrant against Lord Lisbrian was at the suit of your father. How is that? and is it withdrawn? or how do matters stand now amongst them? There can, I suppose, be no indelicacy in my inquiring about so public a business; and something *must* be done for that girl—positively it *must*, at any risk! I would give half my fortune to see her smile! By-the-bye, who *is* that dear, delightful, fat, good Samaritan that hangs

about her with such adoration, that, upon my soul, I could scarcely keep from hugging her? Who is she?"

"I don't think you did quite keep from it," said Rochford, anxious to gain a little time to consider how he should be able to satisfy Mr. Clarendon's benevolent interest, without betraying Lord Lisbrian's secret.

"Why? How do you know? O, you've been playing spy here in the passage! Yes, I did, though, keep from it! for, luckily, her shoulders were too capacious for my arm to get round them! and I'm sure her heart is just as capacious, and as soft! But come, don't look so doleful—I see there is some mystery I am not to penetrate—so, let us never speak a word more on the subject. I must wait here for an hour or two, to see how that poor man gets on. He had a severe attack, and I'm not sure that it is over yet. I must caution you not to let him hear or think of business for some days to come; it might be fatal."

Rochford started at this intelligence, knowing, as he did, that his father would not be prevailed on to consider the report of Lord Lisbrian's illness in any other light than a trick to deceive himself, and would act accordingly. Mr. Clarendon did not appear to notice his agitation; but asked if he might rely on getting horses in that neighbourhood.

Receiving no answer, however, he shook him by the shoulder.

“Why, what is the matter with the man?” he said. “Why don’t you answer me? Perhaps you are afraid your silence has renewed the bad impressions I had conceived of these people? but you need not—they shall all fare well in my opinion for the sake of that lovely one—and I will only suppose that you could not endure any one to share with you the pleasure of comforting or assisting her.”

“I grieve to say I have not the power or the means to comfort them, or even to save them from the utter ruin that must be the consequence of this illness of Lord Lisbrian’s.” Rochford said, with mournful solemnity.

Mr. Clarendon would not ask another question; nor, whatever he might feel, evince any further interest. Peculiarly averse to interference in family concerns, which, of course, frequently fell under his observation, he had for once broken through his rule, and having done so without success, shrank back with tenfold sensibility into his shell of delicate reserve.

But Rochford knew him thoroughly. “Clarendon!” he said, after a few minutes’ reflection, “you must suffer me to lead you blindfold in this business, and still give me your assistance! This much

I am at liberty to tell you : my father has a claim for five thousand pounds upon this unfortunate man, under circumstances that will enable him to ruin his prospects and break his heart, if it is not paid within three days ; and he not only can, but *will* do it ; you know, my poor father. You must come with me, therefore, to Still-Organ Abbey, and tell him the state that Lord Lisbrian is in. Although I have so little hope that even your word or influence will avail, that I should not consider the chance worth your time and trouble, but that he particularly requested to see you upon the subject of his own health."

"Five thousand pounds ! but, good God, surely that can be raised in a day on his own property ?" Mr. Clarendon exclaimed.

"You are mistaken," Rochford answered. "I have heard, both from himself and his agent, that, to save his life or honour, they could not raise a thousand more ; and, under the circumstances of the bank, to hope to borrow it is idle."

Few things in this world give such exquisite pleasure to a really refined mind as a strong instance of refinement in another. It removes the sense of loneliness—it is the recognition of kindred in a higher state of being—Mr. Clarendon now felt this pleasure to his very soul. He wrung Rochford's hand ; and, after a moment's silence,

could not resist saying, "And you knew all this when you proposed for a woman who refused you?"

"I cannot conceive you, of all people, wondering at it!" Rochford answered.

"I don't wonder at it, but I delight in it; and I must say it is only those who would do it themselves who can really understand the delight of it. Come along!"

CHAPTER VIII.

FOR several minutes after Mr. Clarendon and Rochford had set out on their way to Still-Organ Abbey, not a word was uttered by either, both appearing sunk in profound meditation. At last Mr. Clarendon suddenly said—"If I were called upon to point out that thing in nature, which, wearing a fair appearance, I most detest, I should pronounce it to be making professions before they may be necessary, or after they are useless ; and yet there are some circumstances before which everything must give way. You talk so confidently of your father's insisting on the pound of flesh, that it strikes me the only way to satisfy this morbid craving, which, it seems, will bring others to real starvation—that angel girl, amongst the rest—will be for some one to give him such a substantial morsel as will

stop his mouth, and to get security for it from the son, who, I conclude, is able, and will not object to help his father so far."

"Ay," said Rochford, "but that is like bidding a child put salt on a swallow's tail in order to catch it. Who will take the word of the bankrupt's minor son even for a few months?"

"Would not *you*? I understand you and he are sworn friends."

"I would, most unhesitatingly; but *I* know Hubert as no one else knows him."

"And *I* know *you*, and moreover, I know human nature—and, as I believe there scarcely exists that fiend who would break his word under such circumstances—and as I am *sure* it will not be a friend of yours of whom you think so highly—I will put the salt on the swallow's tail if you will undertake to catch it!"

"My dear Clarendon! you do not mean—"

"I *do* mean, though! and, as you said to me some few minutes since, why should *you* of all men be surprised? Will you allow no one to do a good natured thing but yourself?"

"But, my dear Clarendon, your family? and these utter strangers to you!"

"I never spout sentiment, nor attribute to higher, and perhaps better motives, that which is constitu-

tional with me; and for which, therefore, the wise ones—you, I suppose, amongst the rest—tell us we have no merit—as if we had for the more direct grace of God, by which alone they tell us we can do right! But no matter—I say that my profession has the privilege of annihilating the vulgar ideas of time and space in our sympathies, and substituting suffering or distress in their stead—therefore the physician's intimacy is in proportion to the patient's affliction. And for my family—if two gentlemen, sons of noblemen—for I intend to have any security you yourself can give me too—conspire to defraud them under such circumstances, the best effect it could produce would be to force them from a sphere so disgraceful! So, have I satisfied your scruples?" he said, suddenly resuming his playful tone. "And will you now, after these fine speeches, suffer us to descend to the sordid details, in which you will find me as strict and cautious as old Rothschild himself?" And then, with a straightforward perspicuity which was not an unpleasant relief to his usual brilliancy, he laid his scheme before Rochford, who, it need scarcely be added, was only too happy to bind himself in whatever way could be deemed available as a security, in addition to Hubert, for Mr. Clarendon's indemnification against eventual loss, by his now advancing whatever part of the

money might be found necessary to satisfy the irritated old man.

What was their surprise, however, when, upon arriving, and Mr. Clarendon commencing his negotiation with that address of which he was so eminently master, they found that all their planning, all their apprehensions, and all their generosity, were alike thrown away for the present. Lord Still-Organ received them with the utmost suavity, suffered them to make their proposals with the highest good humour, and then, rubbing his hands in a sort of strange, childish glee, assured them they had lost their labour, for that the matter was already satisfactorily arranged, and that he had bound himself not in any way to interfere with Lord Lisbrian for the term of three weeks.

By whom or how he had been induced to do this, however, he refused to tell. And, although Rochford saw that he was speaking truth, he could not divest himself of an overwhelming anxiety upon the subject. On their return home, after a long consultation upon Lord Still-Organ's health, Mr. Clarendon, of course, perceived the dejection of his friend. "As you know more of the circumstances of the case than I do," he said, "I cannot venture to rally you on your low spirits at finding our best wishes apparently anticipated, and must therefore be content with exacting a promise from you that,

should you, at the end of three weeks, find yourself justified in your apprehensions, you will do me the common justice of suffering me to prove the sincerity of the professions I have been betrayed into making, and until then will preserve them inviolate from every human being."

"My dearest friend!" Rochford exclaimed, "I'm sure, at all events, that I never can express half what I feel towards you."

"If you mean of gratitude—as from your lugubrious face I naturally suppose—you may set your mind at rest at once, for I am determined to consider Lady Rosa my debtor, and to prove a most inexorable creditor! Seriously, the poor girl's nerves are sadly shaken—and as it is impossible they can recover in the house with sorrow, sickness, and death, I must order her out of it forthwith; and intend endeavouring to prevail upon her to accompany me to Dublin, where I will take care of her; if she will, I would wait till to-morrow for her. Now, tell me, after all your professions, will your gratitude extend so far as to wish me to succeed in this?"

Rochford assured him that it did, and without any extraordinary effort.

"Come, then! here we are now," Clarendon said: "I will visit her father first, and then request admission to her, and make my proposal,—a bold one

I confess,—but there's something that tells me she has more of soul than *form* about her. I hope you take my pun?" and, on their arrival, going at once to Lord Lisbrian's room, he found him so much recovered as to give a fresh source of pleasure to his benevolent heart; and, in great spirits, he proceeded to Lady Rosa's door. This time he was admitted without hesitation; for already her shattered nerves and scared intellects were comforted, soothed, and interested by his cheerful manner, cordial kindness, and absorbing, intellectual conversation.

"And now," he said, after some inquiries respecting her health and spirits, "I must make my confession! I obtained admission to you under false pretences—I am not come to bid you good-bye! Why do you start, you creature? as if nothing could keep me, unless some one else was taken ill? No," he said, more seriously; "your father, I am happy to say, is doing as well as possible—does not, in short, afford me the least excuse for disappointing everybody else to gratify myself—his affairs are all in as good a train as possible, and, trusting to all this good news to put you into good humour, I am come to make a request to you."

Lady Rosa of course professed her anxiety to oblige him.

"Well, then," he said, "I am come to ask you

to bear me company in my solitary journey back to town."

As he must have expected, she started at this proposal; and he then proceeded to explain to her how necessary he believed it to be that she should leave, for a short time, a scene that must now be so dismal to her; and remove to one where he should have constant opportunity of watching over her health and spirits.

"My family will be charmed to receive you," he said, "and I don't despair of prevailing on your kind friend Mrs. Kelly to accompany you in your journey—if that is a *sine quâ non*—even to the exclusion of myself from the travelling party, as I fear would necessarily be the consequence, unless you happen to have some hospitable old family coach here, that would contain us all. But do say you will come! I shall go off miserably anxious otherwise—and for the presumption of the request on so short an acquaintance, I can only apologize by giving you a lesson in chemistry and metaphysics,—that is, if you know nothing of these matters already—let me see, are your stockings at all tinged with blue? Not the least? Well, thank you for even that little half smile! Well, then, you must know that there are some bodies which, to us, appear as foreign from each other as you and I were this morning, and which, the moment they

meet, will coalesce, and become united; while others, appearing to approximate more, in some particulars, require a much longer time for the same process, or, perhaps, never effect it at all. So much for chemistry. Now for the metaphysical part of it—let me see, I do not think I could give it in a clearer, and certainly not in a more beautiful form, than that in which our Irish poet Moore has clothed it when he says—

“So came thy every glance and tone,
When first on me they breathed and shone;
New as if brought from other spheres,
Yet welcome as if loved for years.”

You know the lines? Are they not beautiful? Well, now, my dear child,” he said, taking her hand with earnest and affectionate seriousness, “as I happen to have lived long enough in the world to think that I may trust to my own discernment where I fancy I have discovered, even at a glance, these qualities that I like,—and not long enough to be chilled from the hope that I may inspire the same confidence where I am conscious of deserving it—will you let me carry you off in triumph? only that, indeed, to make it a complete triumph, it should be against all your friends’ consent! However, as I am an humble aspirant, I am content to take you even with the alloy of papa’s complete approbation, which I obtained before preferring my request to you.

So come, dear, say you will consent? and I will order my carriage away, and give you till to-morrow morning to gain strength for the journey."

But Lady Rosa, though deeply sensible, not only of the kindness of his intention, but of the charm of his playful and yet earnest manner, would not hear of leaving the neighbourhood where her father was in such distressing circumstances; and put into Mr. Clarendon's hand a letter, as truly kind as it was delicate and refined, which she had just received from the Dowager Countess of Shannon-View; who, ever the first to fly from where her presence could be undesirable, was the first to return when she could be of use; and who, now, having heard of Lord L'Estrange's death, and the other distressing circumstances of the family, drove to the gate, and from thence sent up a letter imploring Lady Rosa, by the claims she had on her, as at once a stranger and her adopted country-woman, to suffer her to exercise those offices of kindness and hospitality towards her which she was sure Lady Rosa would, herself, be the first to offer in similar circumstances; but this also had been declined, though with infinite and heartfelt gratitude; and all that Clarendon could obtain, besides the promise of holding herself his debtor for a future visit, was, that she would, as soon as it might be possible, leave the Castle of Lisbrian, even for a few days, and accom-

pany her humble friend Mrs. Kelly to her quiet home.

Bidding her, then, an affectionate farewell—not the less affectionate from the consciousness that, while as much of his kindness as had come to her knowledge had produced a deep and gratifying impression, by far the greater, and more substantial part was purposely concealed from her—he rejoined Rochford in the breakfast parlour, whither he had betaken himself to avoid a meeting with Miss Wilton; and in a few minutes afterwards set out on his return to Dublin, there to gladden many hundreds in whom his absence had produced, in addition to bodily disease, that worst of all suffering, the sickness of the heart.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. CLARENDON had no sooner driven from the door than Tracey, who of course had immediately followed Lord Lisbrian back to the Castle, and had since been engaged in the most melancholy offices there, whispered to Rochford, who was just preparing to take his departure also, "There's one waitin' abroad to spake to you, Sir; and—though it's one I know you don't like—if you'll be said by me, you'll listen to him this time if you never did again—for he says he knows somethin' that's worth knowin', and it might be—through one channel—but the divil, beggin' your pardon, Sir, won't get it out of him but in his own way. And faith—thuck! thuck! Well, whatever's lost by this commotion my poor soul'll go shares any how! But, as I was sayin', Sir, I b'lieve he's right about there bein' no

time to be lost. Sure they say Sir Charles Wilton was here last night, Sir, in the middle of the hurry scurry about my Lord! and that, when he heard at the lodge that he had escaped, he set off like shot again, takin' the road to Still-Organ Abbey, or O'Shaughnessy's—for they're the same—I'm doubtin' to bambouze that fool of a little girl to see could she help him to news of her purty lover Steen. It's Billy Bartley, Sir, that's in the shrubbery abroad, to spake to you." Rochford waited to hear no more, but immediately joined Bartley in the very shrubbery where he had held his moonlight meeting with Miss Wilton.

Endeavouring to disregard the expression of low and malignant triumph, and consciousness of having for once the advantage of his superiors, which Bartley's countenance and whole air exhibited, Rochford addressed him at once with, "Well, Bartley, I understand you wish to speak to me? Tracey tells me you have a most important piece of information to give me—and the sooner the better, as every moment may render it useless; especially if this is true, that Sir Charles Wilton has been here last night, and is gone again."

"It *is*, then, thrue, Sir; as thrue as that you stand there! for I seen him with my two lookin' eyes; and I've my rasons to know, besides seein' him goin'

down that road, that he went where he'll get the news he wanted."

"Come, come, then!" Rochford said, "do not delay another moment in giving me the same information, if that is what you really possess. In short, have you any means of knowing anything of Lord Lisbrian's head clerk?"

But the cunning expression deepened in Bartley's countenance, and wagging his head knavishly, he said, "There's two words to that story, if you please, Misther Rochford! Supposin' for a minute I did know, why should I be expected to inform agin my own flesh and blood? My mother's sister's son?" For a few hours of reflection having cooled both his fury and his generosity, had also given him time to recollect that, as he said himself, he might as well sell his secret, as give it away for nothing.

"If for no other reason," Rochford said, "that if you do not, you will be participating in his guilt."

"The divil a taste of that, any how, beggin' your pardon, Sir! he tuk good care o'that, the dirty mane spalpeen! Participatin'? that's *sharin'*, isn't it, Sir? oh, nor the divil a share as I said before! and, for that same I'll have my rivinge of you, Johnny, my man! as well as of another that shall be nameless for the present; but, sure, what harm to

kill two birds with one stone? So, now, Mither Rochford, what will you give me for my sacret? for I *do* know where Johnny Steen can still be nabbed; and I have the manes to convince you that I do!"

"I do not doubt it, Bartley. And, although I am very sorry you are not instigated by any better motives, towards your landlord, than avarice and revenge, yet I am sure Lord Lisbrian will not object to rewarding you in any reasonable manner."

"Oh, as for my landlord, Mither Rochford, I wondher what is my landlord to me, and you takin' the bit of my mouth that I held undher him?"

"Bartley, I thought I explained to you before, that since, as you are not in my opinion a good instructor of young people, on the new and improved systems, I felt it would be criminal to sacrifice the interests of so many to that of one, and therefore gave you notice that I should endeavour to prevail on Mr. M'Carthy to join me in having you replaced by one more competent,—yet I would take care you should be provided with the means of an honest livelihood."

"I thank you kindly, Sir; but, to spake God's thruth, I don't well know what an honest livelihood manes; and as my pride is more to me than my stomach, I'd rather make a push for myself if I could."

"Well, the feeling is a natural and commendable

one, and, if I can give you any assistance towards it, I shall really be happy to do so."

"Now, that's what I call comin' to the point!" Bartley said, in great exultation. "If you promise me that, Misther Rochford, I ask no more, and you have my sacret for nothin'!"

"I certainly do promise," said Rochford, unhesitatingly, "to give you my best assistance, as such expressions are usually understood, if your plan is a fair, honest, and lawful one, as I have no doubt it is."

"Fair, honest, and lawful it is, Sir; at laste, if it isn't, when it comes to be thried, I free you from your promise."

"Nothing can be fairer," Rochford said; "and on these conditions I give you my promise—making you always bear in mind, Bartley—what every one knows—that I have no money to spare."

"Money is not what I want, Sir; I want nothin' but your good word, your countenance, and support, in a little matther I have in hands, if it turns out to be lawful, and that nothin' else will sway you to see me wronged?" Rochford again unhesitatingly renewed his promise.

"Then you have my sacret, fairly bought between man and man! Johnny Steen is this minute on his way to Glasgow, in Scotland, or thereabouts; and will be there—let me see what day"—

and he drew a letter from his pocket—"ay, Friday, the sixteenth! Now, Sir, to tell you how I know this—who knows but you may have heard that Miss O'Shaughnessy here above—the big, proud man's daughther—was goin' to take her own fling and marry Johnny Steen in spite of all their ould ancesthors? but sure she shewed she had the right dhrop in her at last!" he said, with malicious irony; "for, no sooner did the baronight make up to her than she shewed her breedin' by despisin' the clerk! However, Steen didn't know this—as them colleens never think it necessary to give a man warnin' of anything that way, nor any other way, for that matther—so, accordingly, he writes to me, tellin' me he was goin' to Glasgow in Scotland, and that he would wait there for the girl to jine him; but that, as he knew she couldn't make her way to Dublin, not to say to Glasgow, in Scotland, alone—for she's a fool of a crachur, though she *has* a purty face and two thousand pound—and as the paarents weren't to know of her goin' off in such a hurry, why, who could he think of so fit to bring her to him as me, as he said, with my knowledge of English and geography and all, and so he encloses me a list of the towns I was to pass through, beginnin' from Lisbrian itself—though indeed he might have left *that* out—and tellin' me what I was to say and do, and how much I was to pay in aitch, till I got

her to him. And though I was greatly stomached at his thratement of me here, and often since, whin I wrote to the nager for a little money, still as he wrote such sootherin' words now, and said he'd make up for all, and provide handsomely for me, sure I thought I might as well do it as stay a scare crow here ! Well, he referred me for further particulars and thravelin' expinses to the girl herself, but with a caution that it was as much as my life was worth to let man or mortal know what we wor about ; but, indeed, and indeed if you'll b'lieve me, Misther Rochford, I had no notion he was a thief at that time."

" Well, but did you go to the young lady ?" Rochford impatiently asked.

" Ah then, to be sure I did, Sir ; isn't that what I'm insinsin' you into ? How could I afford to be cuttin' capers of sthrictness, and you takin' the bread out o' my mouth ? faith, Sir, I ever and always thought it took a great dale of ready money to keep one in rale goodness !"

" And yet you see how many are poor and virtuous at the same time."

" Well, I don't know how they can afford it, Sir, and that's gospel thruth ! but as for carryin' off a girl, you know yourself, Misther Rochford, that's a thing that ever and always was, and always will be to the end o' time, and that is nather scrupled by

rich or poor, gentle or semple; so to her I went sure enough. But if I did, what should I find but my lady on her high horse,—ay, faith, as high as Sir Charles himself, and turnin' up her bit of a nose—for she hasn't a handsome nose, that's all that spiles her—at the clerk; and, to make a long story short, divil a toe she'd come with me! nor, 'twasn't that same—but divil a so much as a brass farden she'd give me for my throuble! And, what put me entirely and for ever agin' Steen—the dirty thievin' divil!—is, that she shewed me the words in his ugly letther,—nor doesn't write a good hand at all, Sir! I d'n know how he ever came to be any clerk, let alone head-clerk,—biddin' her not give the money into Bartley's hands, indeed, until we were fairly off! and the impudence of him callin' me Bartley, instead of Billy, the way I wouldn't seem to be his own cousin! but I suppose it's what he thought I was a thief like himself; but I b'lieve I'll have my rivinge of you afther all, ma bouchal! But you must lose no time, Sir, for you see yourself, Sir Charles will pick it all out o' the girl—and if he's like the sистер,—he! hem! I mane like the most o' the world,—he wont stop at thrifles to get his own share."

As Rochford fully agreed in the necessity for despatch, he returned to the house immediately, only delaying to return Bartley's elaborate saluta-

tions, and, at his request, to renew his promise of "helping not to see him wronged,"—and summoning Tracey, to the poor man's no small dismay, he informed him he must set off that very instant express for Glasgow, and there, by shewing his warrant to the proper authorities, put every expedient in force to apprehend the defaulter. "I shall write to Mr. L'Estrange and young Kelly, both," Rochford said, "by this post, and I have no doubt that one or both will be there immediately to assist you."

"Oh, then, that they may I pray God!" he answered, fervently. "For I'm doubting it's myself you'll be looking for next, instead of Steen, Sir; that is, if I was worth the lookin' for."

"Come! come! don't be so childish, Tracey; no one could act better than you did on your last visit to England, which was quite as trying."

"Well, see, Sir, I'm not even as good a man, now, as I was then! throth I'm not, Sir; I'm shattered and frightened in myself somehow."

"Do you mean that you are ill, my poor Tracey?" Rochford asked, kindly; "for if so—"

"Oh no, Sir, not to say ill;—no, no, I don't mane that at all, nor that I'm not able to go; but all I mane, Sir, is, that if I blundher, or do anything quare, you'll make an excuse for me."

"Certainly we shall; but I'm sure you will not, Tracey; for blunders are much more often made

from too much than too little confidence in one's self."

"If that be it, Sir, I'll flourish!" poor Tracey said, with a sad smile; and then, having received some further directions as to how and where he was to procure the warrant, and so forth, he was on the eve of departing, when, turning hastily round once more, he said, "And you wont be angry with me, Misther Rochford dear, for biddin' you mind that poor man above stairs? Sure I know well you will mind him, Sir, and far better than I could, only you'll have so much to do and to think of! But look in on him now and agin, Sir, oftener than you would have done; for the poor man, for some rason or other, seemed to take more to me these two days, and I'd be grieved to think he missed me."

"It would be strange indeed if he did not, Tracey; you are a valuable friend to him, but you may depend on my not neglecting him."

"Oh Lord! neglecting him? Oh, Sir, you don't think I meant that?"

"No, I understand perfectly, and appreciate what you mean, Tracey; but I must hurry you off, for time presses."

"Well, bid God bless me, Sir!" he said, imploringly.

"Shall I?" asked Rochford, smiling.

"Ah, then, now, Misther Rochford!" Tracey

exclaimed, sheepishly, and blushing crimson. "Well, God bless you any how, Sir !"

"And, as I value that prayer, you wont despise mine I know—so God bless and guide you, Tracey!" And shaking his hand kindly, even affectionately, he got him away at last, and left the house himself at the same moment.

Lord Lisbrian's illness subsided more rapidly than might have been apprehended. The perfect quiet and repose, after the violent excitement and alarm, the judicious remedies which had been so immediately applied, and the kind nursing of Mrs. Kelly, doubtless all contributed to this; and within two days after his eldest son was consigned to the vault of his ancestors—as if he had come to the inheritance for no other purpose—Lord Lisbrian was able to set out for London, where every moment added to the necessity of his presence, and without having been able himself to form the slightest conjecture as to the cause of Lord Still-Organ's sudden clemency. His daughter did not accompany him. She had wished to do so—but, besides that he begged of her to remain where she was until he should ascertain what reception awaited him, Miss Wilton having declared that she and her sister were not only without a home, but without a shilling, and knew not in what direction to turn until guided by their brother, who for the present seemed to have forgotten them,

he took it into his head that they wanted to be of the party to London, to take up their old quarters there, and perhaps never leave his house again—a step which—all daring as they were—he knew they could not venture upon unaccompanied by Lady Rosa.

In this, however, he was mistaken—there was no inducement upon earth that could have bribed Miss Wilton at that moment from the spot in which she found herself; and all that she now lamented in the arrangements was that Lady Rosa, in her kind and delicate feelings, could not be prevailed upon to leave her friends in what she would herself have felt to be so painful a position, even to pay her promised visit to Lisanore; and all that Mrs. Kelly could obtain was a promise that she would remember it the moment that she was released from her tenacious guests, and permission, in the meantime, to remain with her until she should be a little more recovered.

Her release came sooner than, and in a manner very different from, what could have been foreseen.

Miss Wilton was not less surprised than she expressed herself at neither having seen nor heard from her brother; but, while his anticipated fury was averted or suspended, and that she was well aware he was not leaving a spring untried to recover his money, or promote his interests, in what-

ever way might seem most practicable, she had that to occupy her thoughts and feelings which did not suffer her to waste them in fruitless conjectures respecting him.

When Lord Lisbrian returned from Tracey's house to the castle, with Rochford as his companion, she believed, as others did, that it was as a prisoner,—a voluntary one, perhaps, but still a prisoner,—and when his illness succeeded, there was nothing to disabuse her of this idea. When she afterwards learned, however, as she contrived to learn everything, that Rochford and Mr. Clarendon had gone together to Still-Organ Abbey, that they had returned together to Lisbrian Castle, and that Tracey was despatched on some distant mission, she began to feel astonished; but still persuaded herself that Rochford was only endeavouring to make the most he could, in the least public manner, of the information she had given him; and, for which, he was, therefore, equally bound to her.

She became, however, intensely anxious for an interview with him; but, as he was no less anxious to avoid it, when he made his visits to the castle, after Tracey's departure, if Lord Lisbrian wished to see him, he either went directly to his room, and left the house as directly from it, or else he merely made his inquiries at the door for each member of the family, and galloped immediately away. He

was not destined, however, always to escape so easily.

It happened to be the very day after Lord Lisbrian's departure for London, as Rochford was riding home to his own lodgings in Lisbrian, in the hope that, by forcing his mind back into the channel of his usual routine of duties and occupations, he might find some relief from the disappointment of all his earthly hopes, which he found, when the excitement of the attendant circumstances had subsided, was beginning to make alarming inroads on his peace of mind, and even on his health, that he was stopped by a boy who delivered to him a note. It was from Miss Wilton, requesting in the most urgent terms to see him immediately, as she had just received a threat of a most distressing and insulting nature, in which his name was involved.

Although lost in astonishment at this intelligence, and unable to conjecture to what it could refer, he determined, of course, to obey the summons, however reluctantly; and was just putting spurs to his horse for the purpose, when he was once more arrested by Bartley, who, pale with passion, but endeavouring to appear dignified and cool, came up to him, and said, "Now, Mистер Rochford, if you please, I'm come to claim the reward of my information!"

"Well, Bartley! what is it to be? For although

we have not yet heard how far it has been available, still, as I have no doubt of your good intentions, I am willing to assist you in any way I can. I should rather, however, that you could call upon me at some other time, as I am now going in great haste to Lisbrian Castle."

"And who are you goin' to there, Sir, if I may make so bold?"

"Why, it is rather a curious question, Bartley!"

"Well, see here, Sir! the truth is this—there's no use in batin' about the bush; I'm in no humour to stand upon my p's and q's now, so I hope, once for all, you'll excuse me; for if you act fairly by me, as you promised, I wont mane to iffind you by anything I say—but this is the whole matther, Sir—Miss Wilton has bamboozled and affronted me in the most outrageous manner, and I'm detarmined to take an action agin' her for brache of promise of marriage, and this is what you bound yourself to assist me in!"

It would, of course, be needless to attempt to describe Rochford's amazement at this disclosure; indeed, as he now observed the man's pale and disordered countenance, the idea occurred to him that he must be intoxicated. On intimating something of this to him, however, his answer was such as at once to remove the suspicion, and to convince Rochford, that, however preposterous, however in-

conceivable, the plan might be, Bartley had not only determined on it, but was firmly persuaded he had good grounds on which to proceed.

He gave to Rochford his own version of the moonlight meeting, shewing him, at the same time, Miss Wilton's note; and, although Rochford saw as clearly through the whole proceeding as if he had been in Miss Wilton's brain, and felt persuaded Bartley could not maintain an action for a moment, yet he could not disguise from himself that, in a court of justice, or in any part of the civilized world, the imprudence of her note, and the tone of the whole interview, would wear the most extraordinary, the most inexplicable appearance. He endeavoured, therefore, to dissuade Bartley from such a proceeding, but Bartley only became exasperated.

"I don't want the young lady!" he said; "nor it's not clear to me I'd take her if I could get her, afther what I've seen of her—to make me discover on my Lord, and then, indeed, be too proud to marry me! That's *quality* pride, I suppose! but she's welcome to it for me! I'll have the more pleasure in humblin' her! I've more to go upon, by a good dale, than half the thrials I see every day in the newspapers, earnin' their four or five hundhurd pounds for brache of promise! and I wondher in my heart at you, Mистер Rochford, to

thry an' hindher any poor crathur from turnin' a penny in a lawful way !”

Rochford then spoke of the difficulties he should have to encounter, and pointed out to him that the very fact of his having brought Joe Murphy with him, and kept him concealed, would shew a pre-concerted plot on his part, which would tend to defeat his object.

“ It ’ll shew no such thing, plase your reverence !” he answered, with a knowing, and almost ironical leer. “ It ’ill shew nothing but that I was afraid of ghosts to walk my lone of a moonlight night !”

“ Bartley, I can talk to you no more ! You have really shocked me ! I must ride on now, and see the lady herself,” Rochford said, unable any longer to control his disgust, and impatient to hear what Miss Wilton could say in her defence ; and he rode away accordingly, leaving Bartley in as much surprise as if the undertaking in which he required Rochford’s co-operation had been the most reasonable that could have been suggested.

While he is on his way, we shall look back to what was the ostensible cause of Miss Wilton’s note to him.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Bartley despatched the note to Tracey, which, as Joe Murphy foresaw, he had nearly spent the night in concocting, to give notice that Lord Lisbrian's hiding-place was discovered, he threw himself upon his bed to think at leisure over the insult, as he called it, which he had received ; and to consider whether the means of revenge were not in his power. It is possible that he might have long continued ignorant of any so effectual as those he was now resolved upon, if he had not been assisted in his lucubrations by the technical knowledge of a person with whom he had, for some time past, been in communication on a subject which had tended, naturally enough, to inflate his own hopes ; and who saw, in the threat of Bartley's

suit, prospective advantages to himself too tempting to be treated with indifference.

As cunning and suspicious as revengeful, however, Bartley had, in telling his story, concealed both the information he had given respecting Lord Lisbrian, and that which he had concealed respecting his head-clerk; and therefore set off to sell his secret to Mr. Rochford, with only such a vague, misty idea of the more effectual punishment in store for Miss Wilton, as made him bind Mr. Rochford in such a promise to support him as could either be applied to that, or to whatever might afterwards appear more desirable. Returning to his legal friend, however, he became more enlightened. He saw that he had power on his side; and, not to wield it would have been very inconsistent with his character. He wrote, accordingly, to the young lady, civilly, as he conceived, renewing his proposals. And when, ignorant of his handwriting, she was betrayed into reading it, and wrote a line on the back of it, renewing her threats of having him horsewhipped if he presumed in the same manner again, he waylaid her about the roads and walks, until, meeting her one day alone, he told her the alternative of her persisting in refusing him—informed her that he had Mr. Rochford's promise to assist and support him in it—and, in the course of the scene that ensued, suffered to es-

cape that which he had been repeatedly cautioned to keep secret till the moment of action, namely, that Mr. Joseph Phelan was his legal adviser and man of business upon the occasion !

Miss Wilton required to hear no more—she saw that the wheel of fortune was in motion—that the meshes were closing round her—and hastening to the house, without uttering another word, she first despatched the note already mentioned to Rochford, and then set out in search of her sister, determined at once to ascertain whether she was aware of Phelan's being in the neighbourhood. She found her in the drawing-room ; and, calling her to her own room, a single question, even without an answer, sufficed to convince her that Susan was perfectly informed on the subject.

For some minutes, Miss Wilton was literally struck dumb with astonishment and rage ; and, perhaps, amidst all she had endured of late, there was not a pang much more bitter than to find herself duped and outwitted by one whom she so heartily despised. At last, she was about to speak—but as Susan saw it was to give vent to her complicated feelings, she hastened to prevent her.

“ Be silent, Frances !” she said ; and Frances remained silent from amazement. “ I advise you to be silent !” Susan continued. “ Your tyranny over me is at an end—I know all about you now—and

I see what a fool I have been to be guided and commanded by you so long !”

Miss Wilton endeavoured to falter out a question, and although the words were inaudible, Susan, for once, was able to catch her meaning.

“ You need not distress yourself by trying to speak,” she said, half compassionately, half maliciously. “ I will tell you all without questions. Phelan has told me the hold he has over you, and intends to advise you to make what terms you can with Mr. Bartley. He has told me how, when you became fearful that Rochford was not enough in love to propose for you, our worthy brother undertook, on condition of our signing those deeds of acquittal, to get him to marry you by drugging his wine, winning three thousand pounds from him at cards, and then sending up-stairs for you, offering you to him, with the gambling debt as your fortune, while Mr. Phelan, in right of his having been in orders, was to perform the ceremony, until more legal forms could be gone through ! You see I know it all ! And, indeed, Frances, I must say, I pitied Rochford when Phelan described to me the state he fell into when you came down, and the proposal was made to him. He says, he fell on his knees, and buried his face in your lap—and that he never did before, and hopes he never will again, hear such screams of agony as those in which he

implored you to say you were not a party in the plot, and not to destroy his ideas of women for ever. And when you could not, he says, he looked up, with a face like a man dug out of his grave, only that his large black eyes were so wide open that they seemed to cover his whole face—that he stared at you for a minute—then rose from his knees, walked to the door, and finding it locked, before any one could stop him, threw open the window, and leaped into the street! I declare it was very like what one has often read in a novel!”

“*Monsieur Rochéfort est en bas, et désire voir Mademoiselle,*” said Celine, tapping at the door of the room in which the young ladies were sitting. Susan stood up and opened the door. Celine repeated her message, addressing herself more directly to Miss Wilton—Miss Wilton gazed on her as if she did not understand, or did not hear her—a third time she repeated the words, adding, as she turned to Susan, “*Mais qu’est ce donc qu’a Mademoiselle ?*”

“Frances, do you hear? Mr. Rochford is below, and wishes to see you,” said her sister. “Perhaps I had better go down and speak to him, or send for Rosa?” And she was moving to the door, when Miss Wilton put out her hand feebly, and arrested her—then remaining silent for an instant longer,

she made a sign to Celine for a glass of water—swallowed it all—stood up—and, though at first she staggered back again, she rose a second time, and then, calmly taking her handkerchief off the table, she walked out of the room, without having uttered a single word from the time she entered it!

Rochford was waiting for her in the little breakfast-room, which was generally the place selected to hold any meeting, without fear of interruption. He felt himself considerably embarrassed from the nature of the business which he supposed was to form the topic of their conversation, and had previously determined to suffer her to lead to it, in whatever manner might be least revolting to her own feelings; but when she appeared, and he saw the state of extraordinary, though strangely subdued, agitation under which she was already labouring, he thought it would perhaps be kinder, and more acceptable to her, that he should himself introduce the degrading subject.

Acting on this supposition, after one or two casual inquiries and observations on his part, to which she scarcely attempted the form of a reply, in a low, gentle voice he began—"I have seen this wretched being, Bartley, Miss Wilton!"—but she put out her hand to stop him. He of course be-

came silent; and after pressing her hand tightly on her brow for a moment, and fetching her breath gaspingly, she said—"Mr. Rochford, it is not of him—it is not of anything so utterly insignificant, so worthless of a thought—that I would speak first;" and she paused—but as Rochford seemed not about to speak, she presently continued, in a subdued, melancholy, but apparently unembarrassed tone—"Have you nothing, Mr. Rochford, to say to me of all that has occurred here within the last eventful fortnight?"

Rochford now cast down his eyes, and, while the colour crept slowly over his face, he emphatically pronounced the words, "Nothing, Miss Wilton."

"Nothing?" she repeated, first in much the same tone of voice, but then, with a sort of scream, as if of bodily pain, and, seizing him wildly by the arm, she exclaimed—"Great God of heaven! Gerald Rochford, do you know what you say?"

Rochford, becoming terrified, besought her to compose herself. "Compose myself! compose myself!" she repeated. "What do you mean by *compose* myself? Am I *discomposed*?—what signs of discomposure have I shewn? My hand is on your arm, it is true," she said, as if only then becoming conscious of its being so; "but even that can easily be remedied!" and she withdrew it, and crossing it

with the other on her lap, "Now," she exclaimed, "am I not sufficiently *composed*? or what would Mr. Rochford ask for more, before he vouchsafes to speak my doom?"

Rochford now stood up. "Really, Miss Wilton," he said, "I do not understand you! I came here by your commands, to hear you on a particular subject; but as you do not seem disposed to enter on it at present—"

"By my commands, you will hear me on another!" she said, finishing his sentence with the most decisive irony. "Mr. Rochford," she then went on, in a sort of desperately calm, determined, but still rapid manner—"Mr. Rochford, are you aware that it is to me you are indebted for the information which has enabled your father to take steps for the recovery of his money? Are you aware that, for your sake, I have betrayed alike the interests of brethren and of friends? and will you still answer that you have *nothing* to say to me? Is this indeed your high-souled principles, your noble generosity? to profit by the poor, fond weakness that—after years of estrangement—still acknowledges *no* tie, *no* duty, *no* influence, in opposition to your interests? and, that profit reaped, that advantage taken,—ay, in the very house with me, in the very room, I believe, in which we now stand,—will you

again repeat that you have *nothing* to say to me?—to *me*, Rochford? to that same Frances Wilton whom you once, at least, dearly loved?”

“*Never*, Miss Wilton, *never*!” Rochford said. But though he said it firmly, it was as a man might utter the word “guilty,” that he knew was to hurry him into eternity.

She lost the power of assuming calmness in a moment, or, perhaps it would be more correct to say, that her partially suspended physical energies were restored by the excitement which his words produced. “Ha! what? *never*?” she almost shrieked. “Have you then forgotten, or would you have *me* forget, the masquerade at the Marchesa di ——’s?”

In the same tone of deep and painful humiliation he answered, “I have neither forgotten, nor can hope that you, Miss Wilton, forget, that, as an ardent, inexperienced, enthusiastic boy, worshipping his own ideal of woman, I was but too ready to believe the first who took the trouble of persuading me—nay,” he said, breaking off, and turning away in uncontrollable emotion and annoyance, “you know this is a subject on which I cannot, and ought not, and never did, speak! Spare me, then, and spare yourself. You are deeply infringing the condition made in your letter, never to give me reason to remember we had ever met before.” And again he would have left the room, but again she almost

forcibly prevented him. She felt, indeed, that the moment of her doom was come—and, like some fated being, she could not resist precipitating it.

“I insist upon your finishing your speech!” she said,—“I *insist* upon it; and methinks it will be but strange affectation of delicacy in you to persist in supposing I cannot bear it.” And again she controlled her excitement, for the purpose of hearing him.

“I was about to say, then,” he continued, “that you know, yourself, how my foolish illusion was dispelled—and I did hope that the catastrophe—if I may so call it—which produced changes so serious, if not on my character, yet certainly on my feelings, and conduct towards the world in general, could not have been without its effects on yours.”

“And how do you know that it has been? How do you know—or rather, have you not indeed perceived that I *am* an altered being, in everything but the one which became, from the first moment to the last, the principle of my existence? Rochford, do you mean to tell me that fervour, constancy such as this cannot repair, in your eyes, one error of despairing passion?”

Rochford, now inexpressibly shocked and distressed, covered his eyes for a moment with his hand, and seeming to consider deeply within himself, came finally to the resolution, that the best means to

end a scene so distressing, and to prevent the repetition of it for ever, would be, not only to disabuse her of the erroneous impression she had evidently taken of his conduct with regard to Lord Lisbrian's affairs, but to reveal to her the secret spring of all his movements.

Feeling, however, that a disclosure such as this, and at such a moment, required considerable delicacy, he took her hand for the first time, and, being very far from having, himself, escaped the contagion of her emotion, he led her back to the seat from which she had started, and resuming his own, he said, "Allow me, Miss Wilton, to speak confidentially and explicitly to you for one moment—and let me beseech of you to exert your excellent sense to hear me with calmness and indulgence, and we shall then—I am convinced—understand each other better—and I shall have the pleasure of assisting you with my best exertions in whatever way my services can be of use. It would be easy for me—you know it would—to assure you that my father and myself felt eternally indebted to you for your intentions in our favour ; but I never will deceive you, Miss Wilton—my father does not know you were the author of the information—and—for myself—" and he stopped, literally unable to proceed. Her eyes ran searchingly over his face ; she saw his emotion ; and

gasping almost to suffocation between hope and fear of its cause—

“For yourself?” she faltered, in a low, hoarse whisper—“for yourself, Rochford?—for I know you came to secure Lord Lisbrian?”

“You are mistaken, Miss Wilton. I came here, on learning their misfortunes, to propose for his daughter—and was refused.”

Miss Wilton, on hearing these words, uttered neither shriek nor groan—she looked wildly into his face for one moment, as if to ascertain that he was serious—apparently, she saw that he was; for then, heaving one heavy, unnaturally heavy sigh, she pressed both her hands again upon her temples, and staggered to the sofa. Rochford, now seriously alarmed, hastened to her, and laying her gently down, rang the bell furiously, and only waiting to ascertain that it was about to be answered, thinking his presence could not be desirable to the wretched girl at such a moment, he rushed from the house in time to escape observation. It was well for himself that he did so. In another minute there was a cry—a shout—an uproar through the house! When the servant, who had been summoned, approached the sofa, it was discovered that Miss Wilton had burst a blood-vessel in the head, and that her turbulent spirit had already passed away.

CHAPTER XI.

IF the value and efficacy of Mrs. Kelly's presence at Lisbrian Castle could ever have been doubted, it would now, at least, have been established. Lady Rosa had by no means yet recovered from the various shocks and afflictions which had fallen upon her; and this last could not fail, from its suddenness, to prove one of the most startling amongst them. The moment Mrs. Kelly heard of it, she summoned Boothe, and committing to her the charge of keeping her young lady engaged in her room, where she then happened to be, until the consternation and confusion should have in some degree subsided, she told her she should lock them both in, and trust to Boothe for making it appear accidental, if Lady Rosa should wish to come out before Mrs. Kelly's return.

These precautions taken, she hastened back to the little breakfast-room—whence the victim of un-governed passions and unprincipled manœuvring was not yet removed; but there ascertaining, beyond all hope, that those passions were at rest for ever, and endeavouring to impress upon the assembled spectators the necessity of quiet and decorum for their young lady's sake, she went herself in search of Miss Susan Wilton, to break to her, as gradually as the circumstances would admit of, the awful visitation that had fallen upon her.

Her benevolent intentions, however, were here of no avail. Bed-chamber and drawing-room, hall and parlour, avenue and shrubberies, were alike searched in vain; the young lady was nowhere to be found; and it was not until, in the hurried up-setting of bottles, and rummaging amongst all the little nothings upon Miss Wilton's dressing-table, in search of that elixir which must fail to be found once in the course of every person's career on earth, that an open slip of paper, with a few lines written with a pencil, was discovered, directed to her whose eyes, ears, and heart were now alike insensible to their import. The lines were—"Your discovery has not precipitated my fate an hour; all was already arranged—as Celine is now at liberty to inform you—and chiefly by the means of *your* beau, Mr. Bartley.

I dare say, that before you find this, where I intend to put it, I shall be—Susan Phelan.”

In the meantime, Mrs. Kelly had returned to Lady Rosa's room; and finding that her little trick of locking the door had not been detected, she dismissed Boothe—who, on her part, was not sorry to be released from the constraint which she had herself been obliged to put upon her feelings of curiosity, awe, and terror—and entered upon her task of disclosing to Lady Rosa what had happened, with all the caution of which her guileless nature was capable.

Manage it as she could, however, the truth appeared in a few minutes; and she saw at once that she was right in her conjecture, that nothing which had yet occurred had proved a greater shock to her who seemed destined for the present to endure trials and afflictions of every different form and degree. She seemed literally to bow beneath them, now, in passive despair. And when Mrs. Kelly again proposed taking her away, at once, from the scene of so much misery, instead of making any further objection, she seemed anxious to escape, as if in leaving Lisbrian Castle she could leave behind her some part at least of the nervous horrors that she felt were now about to take possession of her, and, as she feared, to upset her reason. Once only she drew back, and with pale and quivering lips,

and eyes distended in dismay at her own forgetfulness,—and pronounced the words “Poor Susan !” But Mrs. Kelly then produced the note ; and Rosa, apparently utterly exhausted, gave only one glance of astonished inquiry to Mrs. Kelly, held up her hands and eyes for one moment, and then suffered herself to be led to the carriage.

“And I’m sure it’s little I thought my dear child,” Mrs. Kelly said, as she and her young friend drove from the door, and Lady Rosa lay back sobbing,—“it’s little I thought that your first visit in the country was to be to me, and that in such sorrow of heart ! But God he knows what’s best—and he knows, amongst the rest, that you are more welcome to me in your sore sorrow—since it did light upon you—than in all your blaze of glory ! Oh, whisht ! whisht ! now, my darling child, and don’t be flyin’ in the face of God ! You’ll see, yourself, matters will come round yet,—it’s a long lane that has no turning ;—and I’m comforted by the very weight of the affliction that has fallen upon you ! It must turn—you’ll see it must, honey,—and any way, it couldn’t be in better hands than it is,—and that’s a fine man that Doctor that we had from Dublin,—the very clap of his hand upon your back has sense and manin’ in it !—and as sure as my name’s Kelly, he’s layin’ his head to Mither Rochford’s to set things to rights. And that poor crachur of a Tracey,

a good and true crachur as ever dhrew the breath of life, and you'll see, wherever he's gone, it's for good." And thus avoiding the one sad and recent subject, that seemed to admit of no consolation even from her, Mrs. Kelly contrived to draw the poor mourner's thoughts away from it.

"He is indeed!" Lady Rosa said, warmly, in answer to her last observation. "I like Mr. Tracey, of all things."

"Whethen, do you now, jewel? and God bless you for that word—my poor little man!" And there was something in the deeply pathetic and heartfelt tone in which Mrs. Kelly uttered these words that made Lady Rosa ask why she pitied him so deeply.

"Oh, no matther, honey! it's a little sacret of our own; but, indeed, I don't doubt but I'll tell you some time, only I must get lave first."

"I fear, indeed, that he will be a severe sufferer by our misfortunes," Lady Rosa said, in a tone of melancholy meditation.

"It will be a sore blow to him, my poor little man! there's no denyin' that," Mrs. Kelly answered, much in the same spirit,—“a sore blow to himself, besides his natural feelin' for the family."

"To himself? How? Oh, but I suppose by some unfortunate debt!" Lady Rosa said, with a painful sense of mortification.

"Not of yours, my dear; I mane, not of your

father's,—my poor man was too honest-hearted ever to have a shillin' in a bank in his life—no; but a little money that was due to him by your uncle—not that he ever expected that, nor intended ever to mention it,—but he thought that if your father continued to live on here, or any of you to put matters once to rights, and back him with the people, that he might be of use in some capacity that would enable him to live, besides paying his rent; for you see there's no call for anything almost here, Lady Rosa; and only that Mr. Kelly was able at first to stock his ground plentifully, and keep it so, we couldn't be as we are—for there's always sale for good stock, one place or another—but one penny piece we can't give to one of the children, boys or girls; so all we can do for them is to make them as good, humble, and industrious as we can, and send them away as soon as they're able to do for themselves, the poor darlings! but sure they're with God still! But as Tracey has not even the manes to stock his own few acres, and Catherine, as I said, not able to bring him a shilling—but, God forgive me! what am I sayin' at all? I declare I can no more keep any secret from you than from one of my own! but I hope you did not understand me, jewel? for Catherine would never forgive me if she knew!”

“But she shall not know, my dear madam, and

you need not accuse yourself of betraying her ; for you must not think me so unobservant as not to have guessed something of this before."

" Whethen, did you now, Lady Rosa ? and how, I wonder ? for they are both staid and quiet, and don't go on with any capers, like younger people ; and, indeed, until the change that seemed to be about to take place, with you all comin' over, I believe they had half made up their minds to give up all thoughts of it. It will be the harder on them now, I doubt, for that peep of hope !" and the mother stole a tear, she hoped unperceived, from her eye. Lady Rosa remained silent ; but she registered a vow in her heart, the same moment, that she did not afterwards forget.

In the meantime they arrived at the neat, quiet homestead, which, though usually so cheerful, now wore a sober, if not a saddened, hue, which, while it accorded with the feelings of the guest, could not be accounted for in any other way than the total absence of the happy young faces that were generally sporting round it. Not a child, not even a servant, now appeared, though there was no excuse of saving hay ; and Lady Rosa took possession of the nice little room that had, on the despatch of a private messenger from the castle, been hastily prepared for her, without one intrusive eye having marked her sorrow. Here, where she was suf-

ferred to indulge her feelings in whatever way was most congenial to them, and where the delicate forbearance manifested towards her proved a stronger stimulus to her fortitude and resignation than the most elaborate and ostentatious attentions could have proved, Mrs. Kelly left her in the charge of her two elder daughters; while believing that the real test of kindness and charity was to bestow it where it was most required, she despatched a messenger to Mr. Rochford to inform him of the frightful event which had taken place at Lisbrian Castle, and—little imagining his part in the drama—to entreat his advice and assistance; and forthwith returned there herself, to see the last sad offices performed with decency and respect to the remains of one whom she had not loved in life. Her task proved more troublesome than she had calculated upon however; for when the messenger, whom she had despatched to Still-Organ Abbey, returned, it was with information that Mr. Rochford had left the neighbourhood about half an hour before, to be absent some days, and in what direction no one seemed to know; so that deprived of his effectual assistance, and, in the agitated state of her spirits, as little capable of understanding as of making herself understood by the English servants, she was obliged to content herself with such minor arrangements as a female alone could superintend;

and, returning once more to her quiet home, commit the rest to Mr. Kelly, who took her place at Lisbrian Castle until the last rites were performed—when the burying-ground of the Lisbrians did, indeed, according to her own words, open, for the first time, to receive a Wilton—laid amongst them by stranger hands,—and the funeral service performed by the Protestant curate of the parish.

Had Lady Rosa been suffered to continue undisturbed for some time in the peaceful, kind seclusion of Lisanore,—where, while every heart was filled with her image, and every head occupied in plans for her comfort, there was a delicacy, which, springing from the deep sympathies of nature, required no polish from the rules of art to teach it to avoid all that could be distressing, and where, in watching the youthful feelings and ideas of the simple, innocent, but intelligent Lucy, she found a source of interest entirely new to her,—it is possible her health and spirits would gradually have recovered their tone, and that,—while ever shuddering over the manner of her release from the promise never to interfere with the feelings of her unfortunate friend for Rochford—hope would in time have poured that balm into her heart which years alone have power entirely to exhaust. But such was not her doom—the measure of her trials was not yet complete.

It might have been about a week or ten days

after Lord Lisbrian's departure for London that Lady Rosa and her friends were surprised by an unannounced visit from her brother Hubert, now Lord L'Estrange. He came in haste—and in haste he told her she must prepare to accompany him back to London,—he had come over in the midst of their press of business solely for the purpose of escorting her. It would be difficult to say to which, the guest or the hosts, this summons brought most dismay—Lady Rosa herself turned even paler than she had been of late—Mrs. Kelly sat with her eyes and mouth distended—and Lucy fairly burst into tears!

Hubert had no discretionary powers, however. In a private conversation, which, after a few minutes, he succeeded in procuring with his sister, he informed her that the conduct of Lord Lisbrian's numerous creditors had, in kindness, liberality, and compassionate feeling for the bereaved father, whose personal appearance bore evident marks of his being himself the greatest sufferer amongst them, exceeded anything that could have been calculated upon by the most sanguine or the most encroaching temper; and that when, almost immediately after, Steen, whom Tracey had succeeded in apprehending in Glasgow, was sent prisoner to London with valuable papers, bonds, securities, and money to a large amount, found upon his person, it had

seemed as if this second alarm was likely to subside with little more of evil consequences than the first had done; and that Lord Lisbrian had, accordingly, once more got into a state of extravagant spirits and anticipation. Suddenly, however, the scene appeared to change—the creditors themselves were as kind, accommodating, and indulgent as before; but Lord Lisbrian became an altered man—his spirits drooped, and, refusing for two days to account for it in any manner—even while deep groans burst from him every now and then—he suddenly announced to Hubert on the third, that he must set off that very instant for his sister, “and tell her,” he said, “that if she wishes to make a sacrifice to save her father from worse than death, she will not delay her coming one hour.”

Lady Rosa, when she heard these words, again became as pale as death. “It is Lord Halimore!” she faltered out, catching her brother by the arm.

“No, I do not think it is,” Hubert said, fondly supporting her. “Halimore has behaved extremely well. Whatever spell Lady St. Clair exercised over him, to conjure him away that unfortunate evening, did not stand one hour’s reflection; and, even before my father arrived in London, he had found me out, accused himself in the most heartfelt manner for his momentary defection, and made his pro-

posals with the utmost delicacy, saying that, though he should not attempt to obtrude them upon you at such a time, he could not bear to remain an hour longer under the imputation his conduct must involve, and therefore made known his sentiments to me; but, although in fairness to him I immediately communicated them to my father, and he was, of course, highly delighted with the prospect for you, I know it neither is nor could be this which has caused his present summons."

"I am glad of that, at least, as it would be utterly impossible I could have listened to Lord Halimore's suit,—any other sacrifice—"

"Utterly impossible! I trust not, my dearest sister," Hubert interrupted; "for, notwithstanding the liberality of the creditors, the hopes of my father, and even the assets found upon Steen, both Kelly—who is one of the most upright and clear-headed fellows I ever met with—and myself are convinced, that however long the settlement may be deferred, and it must be a long time, from the strange and unprecedented involvements, when it comes there will be another crash, and one that cannot be patched up again. This, of course, while there is a doubt, is to be kept secret; but, in the meantime, I confess it was almost my only solace to think that you had so bright a prospect

before you. I think much more highly of Halimore than I ever did before."

"I am glad to hear it, for his sake," Lady Rosa quietly replied; "but to me, personally, it must ever be a matter of indifference."

"Is this resentment for his desertion, Rosa?"

"No, it never cost me even a thought! But question me no further now, my dear brother; I will instantly obey my father's summons; and if I am capable of feeling pleasure again, it will be in making any sacrifice to soothe and comfort him." And she left the room to commence her hasty preparations. Her brother remained for a moment in the room behind her. "*Any* sacrifice?" he repeated mournfully to himself; for although he had no clue to guide him as to what the sacrifice really was to be, he had seen enough to make him apprehend it was to be a painful one that was to be demanded of her.

He was the first to propose, on her re-appearance, that Lucy Kelly should accompany them. "She is such a mere child," he said, "that the seclusion in which we live will be no objection to her; and she seems so fond of you, and you of her, that her society might beguile you of many a sad and lonely hour."

Lady Rosa blessed him for the suggestion; but then recollected Mrs. Kelly's former refusal, and

was almost afraid to make the proposal. Her fears were, however, without foundation. Lady Rosa, resplendent in happiness, gaiety, and prosperity, was, to her, very different from Lady Rosa in affliction and in poverty.

“Go with you ! whethen, to be sure, she’ll go with you, my dearest child !” exclaimed the good woman ; “and will stay as long or as short as ever you plase, and only too proud and too happy she’ll be to be allowed the honour ; only take care, Miss Lucy, and don’t be comin’ home to us fine and upsettin.’ ”

“ I won’t be followin’ Lady Rosa’s example, at any rate, if I do, Mamma,” said the now laughing girl.

“ Oh, but that’s no rule ; for it’s always upstarts that’s most inclined to be so.”

“ Well, Mamma, I’ll try not to be an upstart ;—but take care of my bees now winter is coming on.”

Mrs. Kelly then drew Lady Rosa aside—“ And now, honey, just put her into any hole or corner,” she said ; “or a pallet on the flure of your own room, or any room, will be as good as a bed of down to her,—she never slept in a right bed yet !”

For how could the simple-minded country-woman suppose that the broken banker had not made the slightest alteration in his splendid style of

living? Lady Rosa, who had not thought upon the subject at all, only smiled, and hoped she should be able to make Lucy comfortable.

“ Well, and now good-bye, jewel! and God Almighty power his blessins on you!” Mrs. Kelly continued, still holding her fast in the corner into which she had drawn her. “ And only I’m afraid of affrontin’ you, I’d pray one prayer more,—but what matter? sure I can pray it in my heart as well! and, faith, one ’id think you guessed it, my little darling, by that beautiful blush risin’ in your cheeks! But never mind—it’s between yourself and myself, if you even do—and God knows his own time for all things;” and as Lady Rosa now broke away with a hasty embrace, she, her brother, and Lucy, were, in a few minutes after, on their way to London.

CHAPTER XII.

THE presence of Lucy Kelly, during the journey, preventing any private communications between the brother and sister, Lady Rosa arrived in London as far from the least idea of what the nature of the sacrifice required of her might be as her brother's meagre information on the subject was calculated to leave her. New to life, however, as she still was, and knowing "sacrifices" only by the name, she felt rather cheered than depressed by the idea of being called upon to make one for her father, to whom she could with truth have said, "Father, with all thy faults, I love thee still !" His manner of receiving her, however, was calculated to chill these sensations—he embraced her affectionately, indeed, and lavished caresses on Lucy Kelly—but there was a feverish, fitful excitement

in his manner, a conscious shunning of her eye, and a hollow, unreal laugh, that recalled to her mind the morning of Tracey's shriek ; and, without enabling her to fix on any definite subject of alarm, caused her heart to sink within her. Whatever his intentions might be, however, he spared her hearing of them, not only the evening she arrived, but the whole of the next day ; and it was on the morning of the third after her arrival, that, entering the drawing-room, unconscious that any one was there, she found Lord Halimore alone.

It is very probable, from what had passed between him and Hubert, that nothing was further from his intentions than to have said anything more of his feelings, for some time, than what he had already confided to him, in justification, as he said, of his character—but the fate which rules the destinies of lovers had decreed it to be otherwise.

Lady Rosa, being unprepared to meet any one in the room, and particularly him, started back, as the recollection of her brother's communications flashed upon her mind, with a consciousness so ill-disguised, that the young man sprang forward to arrest her retreat ; and, between her hurried apologies and his delighted triumph, his greetings had become proposals almost before either were aware of it. The moment she became so, she burst into tears. Lord Halimore was startled, as well as sur-

prised, and seemed fearful of speaking again, even to ask for an explanation. She perceived his embarrassment, and hastened to relieve it.

“My weakness surprises you, my Lord,” she said; “and yet you must be aware there are agitating associations connected with your presence.”

He muttered something of acquiescence, but it was unintelligible.

“Nay, why should I try to deceive you?” she said, more collectedly. “Lord Halimore, I think it due to you to say that I feel, more deeply than I can express, the disinterestedness—I might say the nobleness—of this address. Nay, permit me for one moment,—I know that you intimated your flattering intentions to my brother Hubert before you thought it decorous to mention them to me, and that he confided to you the precarious state of our pecuniary affairs,—and—could you, my Lord, bear with me,” she said, almost smiling, “if I say that I know, however you may honour me with your good opinion, your regard for me is not such as would lead you to disregard all worldly advantages if there had not been a great deal of generous feeling mingled with it? I do not mean mere compassion for what my circumstances may be, but generous consideration for what may have been expected from you!”

Lord Halimore, never very much accustomed to

analyse his own feelings or motives, and being conscious of a great deal of admiration for the beautiful girl before him, of course disclaimed being influenced by anything but love, and consideration for his own happiness.

“I should be sorry, truly sorry, indeed, to think it, Lord Halimore,” Lady Rosa said; “for I have not much happiness just now to spare—and I feel that to interfere with yours would deduct from the little I may have.”

His Lordship asked why then she should hesitate to make him happy?

“Because it is not in my power, my Lord;” she said. “You could not be happy when you found, that, instead of the generous purpose you have in view, you had made me utterly miserable.”

“Good God!—no, to be sure!” the young man exclaimed. “But—but—”

“Let it be enough, Lord Halimore, for me to assure you that it would be so; and this with having the highest esteem, and henceforth the most sincere friendship for you. But I am obliged to utter the truth in this harsh language, because I know my father might encourage you to expect a different answer, and I know he will still try to persuade you that time may alter my sentiments; but I trust that after what I have said—”

“Oh, certainly, Lady Rosa, after what you have

said, I could not think of urging a suit that is disagreeable to you !”

“ But you must say you believe I am not ungrateful ?” she said, smiling, and holding out her hand to him. He took her hand and kissed it ; but, while he disclaimed any cause for gratitude, he began to think that he really must have done something very generous. Nor would Lady Rosa regret having convinced him of this, if she had known that—from believing ever after such to be the character he had to support, what before was, with him, an unconscious, almost capricious, impulse, grew into a fixed and steady system, and that he became one of the most amiable of the heartless, superficial members of society, and passed through life happy and respected.

Lord Halimore had but just left the room, when, hurried, heated, and agitated, Lord Lisbrian made his appearance : his countenance wore even a wild expression of anxiety. “ Halimore has just been with you,” he said abruptly to his daughter. “ Has he proposed for you ?”

Lady Rosa admitted that he had.

“ Well, well ! and what was your answer ?” he asked, almost foaming with impatience and apparent alarm.

“ My dear father, bear with me,” his daughter said, deprecatingly. “ But,—” and she paused, un-

willing to inflict what she feared would be a shock to him.

“Speak out! speak out! for the sake of Heaven, girl!” he exclaimed, grasping her arm until she shrank in agony. “Speak! and tell me my doom at once!”

“I have refused him, Sir. I could not—” but he heard no more.

“Thank Heaven!” he exclaimed, throwing up his arms in great excitement. “Thank Heaven! my greatest stumbling-block is thus removed! Now, then, Rosa, hear your wretched father, and deal mercifully with him if you can! You must prepare to marry—Sir Charles Wilton!”

It might be the result of the deep aversion she had conceived for one who had so cruelly deceived her,—it might be the previous excitement of her nerves,—or, it might be sudden terror at the wild determination of her father’s manner,—but, whatever it was, mortal ear has seldom been pierced with a shriek more fearful than that which escaped Lady Rosa, almost, as it seemed, simultaneously with her father’s uttering these words—and, pressing her hands upon her own ears, as if fearful of a repetition of the hideous sentence, she stared in his face, and seemed about to madden on the spot.

Lord Lisbrian was an object of compassion at that moment. He had never before conceived the

extent of his daughter's feelings in any way—and, as if a new being had developed itself before him, he returned her gaze, but with more of conscious inquiry, for some minutes—and then strode up and down the room in a perfect paroxysm of agony. She, in the meantime, had never removed her hands from each side of her head, and followed his every step with watchful, but unmeaning eyes. Presently he approached her, and she sprang to the further corner of the room from him. He stopped, and made imploring gestures to her to hear him,—at last, he bent his knee to the ground—when, rushing towards him, with another shriek, though less dreadful than the last, she flung her arms about his neck, sank on her knees beside him, and happily found relief for her over-excited nerves in a fit of violent hysteric weeping. She wept not long alone—Lord Lisbrian joined his tears to hers; and it was not until she perceived this that her alarm began to return.

“What, oh! what *can* have happened, my father, to afflict you thus, and to induce you to utter such words to your poor child?” she said, fondly wiping the tears from his face with her own handkerchief. “What hold can that wretch have over us that we cannot spurn? You mentioned once, I remember, something about his taking an action against me,—let him take it, father! Horrible as the idea is, I

would rather appear in every court of Europe as a criminal than in a palace as his wife ! and I know my own dear papa would rather pay any damages for me than consign me to eternal misery. Or, if you could not, there is one that would,—yes,” she said, clasping her hands, while a ray of beaming, exalted happiness shone over her face,—“yes ! there is one who would pay it with his heart’s blood, and whom I would not shame to ask in such a cause.”

“Alas ! alas, my dearest child !” Lord Lisbrian said, “you have totally mistaken the nature of this person’s hold over us. Little, as you say, should I mind an action such as you speak of, or any damages, to secure your happiness, oh, God ! how little !—if I begged them from the stranger !” and he bowed his head between his hands.

Lady Rosa again shrank from him, in undefinable terror. He looked up when he perceived it ; and standing up, and drawing her arm within his, “Come with me to my dressing-room, Rosa,” he said ; “we shall there be free from interruption—and that which I have to reveal must live and die between us two.”

And here we would drop a veil. A father humbling himself so far beyond humanity as to beg a darling child to sell her happiness to save his honour is a sight too awful to be presented, unnecessarily, in all its true and vivid colours, to the eye of the

thoughtless and the unfeeling—and too painful for those of an opposite description, let it suffice, then, to give such a general outline as will enable the reader to follow out the sequel.

It was but too true that Sir Charles Wilton had made his appearance at Lisbrian on the night of the confusion there ; but no sooner had he heard of Lord Lisbrian's having already made his escape, than, without wasting time, or trusting his fury in an interview with his sister, he stepped again into the carriage that had brought him to the gate where he received the intelligence, drove to Still-Organ Abbey, and there ascertaining that Rochford had just left the house after the receipt of Miss Wilton's note, and that the old man had not yet retired to rest, he requested an interview, and was admitted, as any one purporting to have come on business, that night, would have been. He entered upon particulars at once ; he informed Lord Still-Organ that he knew—no matter how—of his intended lodgment in Lord Lisbrian's bank, and of its appropriation ; and, informing him of his own involvements, and his position with regard to Lady Rosa, with a degree of anxiety which, to the old man, appeared the delirium of love, he proposed that Lord Still-Organ should bind himself not to take any step whatever against Lord Lisbrian or his character, either by word or act, on the subject at issue between them, for the

term of three weeks, unless urged by Sir Charles himself thereunto ; and that, on the other hand, no bribe or offer of accommodation from any other quarter was to induce him to resign his power of doing so without Sir Charles's concurrence, within that period. In return for all this, Sir Charles gave his note of hand on the spot for the five thousand pounds, to be paid by him to Lord Still-Organ at the expiration of the three weeks, should he not before have released him from his pledge, and left him free as he found him. In which event Lord Still-Organ was to institute the suit against Lord Lisbrian for Sir Charles's indemnification—should the latter consider it at that time expedient to enforce this part of the treaty ; and lest Lord Still-Organ might not be disposed to trust to the bond of a stranger, Sir Charles mentioned, with a slight and dignified smile, the ten thousand pounds which could not be forfeited from Lady Rosa for her father's debts ; and over which she had no power until she should be either married or have attained the age of twenty-one.

But Lord Still-Organ required no further satisfaction. Seeing at a glance the sincerity of Sir Charles's anxiety, and fancying he knew the only impediment likely to stand in his way, he deemed him an infinitely better mark for his money than the bankrupt banker, in whose favour the whole

world appeared to him so madly interested. Accordingly, he asked not a moment's time for consideration ; but, feeling that the plan comprised, at once, the two great objects of his own anxiety—the recovery of his money, and the removal of Lady Rosa from the path of his son—he eagerly caught at Sir Charles's note of hand ; and, on his part, drew up and signed an agreement in every way conformable to Sir Charles's dictation. The new allies then parted as old friends—Sir Charles betaking himself to Milan Hall, and Lord Still-Organ repairing to his bed, chuckling over his having, after all, outwitted his son and all his partisans.

Such was the arrangement which deprived Lord Still-Organ of the power of availing himself of Mr. Clarendon's generosity the following day ; and such was the tale which the miserable father now unfolded to his shuddering daughter.

Sir Charles Wilton had arrived in London the very day after Steen, and in the midst of Lord Lisbrian's exultation on the prospects of amicable, and, as he thought, satisfactory arrangements opening to him once more. In a moment those prospects were overclouded. Sir Charles, conscious of the light in which he must now appear to every member of the family, and therefore willing to avoid any unnecessary intercourse with them until he should have made his terms, sought and obtained

a private interview with Lord Lisbrian, and then discovered to him the fearful position in which he stood, and the only means by which he could extricate himself. Lord Lisbrian immediately wrote to Rochford to inquire into the truth of these statements; but Rochford had left home, and as it was rather with the hope of obtaining his advice, sympathy, and assistance, than with any doubt of the truth, that he addressed him, when he received no answer, it disappointed his feelings, but did not afford him any grounds for resistance.

At first, indeed, he talked of borrowing money, or appropriating part of that which had been recovered to the instant satisfaction of Lord Still-Organ's claim; but Sir Charles, in whose presence he gave utterance to these vague intentions, had the unfeeling insolence to remind him, that, by attempting to do so, he should add another blot to his character without effecting his object, as he, as creditor, would not permit it. Lord Lisbrian then raved like a madman—cursed himself, and a wicked, suspicious world that could not distinguish between guilt and innocence, and swore he would rather be dishonoured, and put a pistol to his head, than see his child sacrificed to a man who had shewn himself in such colours.

“As you please, my Lord!” Sir Charles Wilton

said, and walked out of the house. And, once again Lord Lisbrian *did* meditate suicide—but he thought of Rochford, and of his earnest, soul-felt rebukes and exhortations in Tracey's garden. Yes ! it was by his earthly instrument that the Almighty was pleased to spare the sinner. Lord Lisbrian desisted—and the temptation overcome, brought him almost his first experience of humble self-gratulation. But, so short was the way he had yet proceeded in the regulation of his mind or feelings, that the very self-respect he felt on that point caused him to shrink the more keenly from the public loss of character.

When he met his creditors again that day—beheld their fearless, open countenances—heard their noble, liberal sentiments—and experienced their trust and confidence in him—instead of proceeding the length of a manly disclosure of the predicament in which he stood, he rushed from their presence in agony of mind—and, telling himself that the one temptation he had resisted was enough for one occasion so trying, he allowed himself not another moment's consideration, but despatched his son to Ireland for his daughter, and wrote to Sir Charles Wilton that he had done so !

There is a class of characters to whom the very fact of having bound themselves to an act renders them more doubtful, more anxious, more scrupulous

respecting its propriety than they were before. To others, on the contrary, the step once taken, the anxiety is over, and reflection is never again allowed to intrude. Of this latter class was Lord Lisbrian. From the moment he had sent for his daughter his spirits had become more composed; and it was only the sight and feeling of her unconscious and confiding sweetness and affection, when she arrived at his command, that again upset him; and, almost with tears, he had begged from Sir Charles Wilton the two days' reprieve which she had already experienced.

Time was, however, pressing; the three weeks, the utmost limits to which it was deemed expedient for Lord Still-Organ to hold his power suspended—at which time Sir Charles's bond became forfeited—were now almost expired; and Sir Charles reminded Lord Lisbrian that, as nothing less than the solemnization of the nuptials would content him, the longer Lady Rosa's feelings were now spared, the more close and sudden would the execution follow upon the shock. To this reasoning Lord Lisbrian was compelled to yield. And it was immediately after that he rushed into the drawing-room to his daughter—led her to his dressing-room—and, finding that her repugnance to Sir Charles was such as no other arguments or en-

treaties could overcome, finally laid every particular open before her, as clearly as it has been laid before the reader, but accompanied with all the agony necessarily attendant upon such a communication; and then, once more knelt at her feet, and took her hand in his while waiting to hear his doom.

Pale, cold, and damp, was that hand; and she made no attempt again to raise him from his knees, nor to prostrate herself beside him! She was not conscious, indeed, of any change of feeling towards him, nor of almost any kind of feeling whatever—but it acted, nevertheless, as an instinct in the suspension of her reason.

“Speak, Rosa! speak, my dear child! at least,” he said, “let me hear my doom—and, be it for life or death, it will come less terribly from your lips.”

“Do not mention death again, just now, papa!” she said, in a strange, low, terrified tone, and a fearful shudder shook her frame.

“Rosa! Rosa! my beloved, lovely child!” her father exclaimed, now becoming terrified for her; “you are ill! you are going to die before my eyes!” And he rang the bell with violence, and called for a glass of wine. She took a little of it without opposition.

“No, no!” she said; “it is not my own death I fear! would—would that *it* were come! But, oh,

father, did you say, and did you say truly, that you were about to take your own?" Lord Lisbrian reiterated that it was so.

"Father, how many days yet remain of the three weeks?" she asked.

Her father turned away, and writhed in agony, before he answered—"Only two, my child!"

She drew forth a heavy sigh, and said, "I wish it were but one! I wish it might be over this very hour!"

"What, my child?" her father asked, in a low, tremulous tone, and he scarcely knew himself what he wished that her answer should be.

"*The sacrifice*," she said, steadily. And Lord Lisbrian burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"Do not weep for me, father," she said, but without seeming to share in his emotion. "Do not weep for me—I shall not suffer long. I know, I feel I shall not! and I wish it to be over. But there is one thing I wish to say, father—and I know you will bear with me, as it is the only ray of reason or principle I feel remaining: had you really been guilty, I would not have done this; I think, at least, oh, God!—I should not! But to see your fame, your honour blasted unjustly—and then—and then—oh! father, send for Sir Charles Wilton, for I feel that I was sent into the world to be a sacrifice to save your soul!" And now again Lord Lisbrian was terrified, not for her life, but for her reason. He

folded her in his arms, and whispered every endearing epithet that he thought could soothe or reassure her.

“And I call God to witness, my child,” he said, “that if I had but myself to think of, I should bear this blow unshrinkingly. But, oh, Rosa! when I think of you and my poor noble Hubert obliged to hide your heads when my name was named before you!—oh, no! I could not—I could not live to bear the thought! And, then, Rosa—and, then, my darling girl, if you will only consider how very lately you looked upon Sir Charles Wilton as —”

“Hush! hush, father! not a word of that!” she interrupted, pressing her hand firmly over his mouth. “I do not want to enhance my sacrifice, or to remind you that the deception of which he was guilty—which in many cases, I know, might be pardonable, in some few, perhaps, almost excusable—was, in his, aggravated by every mean and sordid interest that can degrade, or shew to be degraded, the soul of man! It was not that he *concealed* his profession of faith—that might be a question between his conscience and his God—or a temporary indecision in his own mind—but he reviled—he derided—he denounced his own sect, until even I, in my most wayward enthusiasm, sought to soften him;—and yet all this was but acting! and for what purpose?—to patch up his broken fortunes by the hand of a cre-

dulous fool, whom he is willing now to consign to eternal misery for the paltry sum of ten thousand—nay, if I understand you right, of five thousand pounds! You see I know it all, father! for L'Es-trange told me his circumstances. But it was not on this I meant to dwell—I did not intend even to have touched upon it—I only intended to have told you that, my own soul, and he who made it, for his own wise purposes, only know what a revolution has taken place in my whole being since those days—and that I can never again be brought back to the childish heartless, soulless, imbecile, earthly automaton I was then! No, father—the frost of a chilling, superficial education has been broken up—the streams of feeling that, even then, occasionally made their way—in wild, unprofitable channels, I admit—have found their source in the depths of a spirit and a soul destined for immortality! And if, instead of the delightful flowery path through which I lately begun to dream of their flowing towards it, it pleases God to call me suddenly across a hideous gulf, I will not shrink from it—but neither will I have the gulf spread over with a gaudy carpet that would not sustain even my first, tottering step!”

“Compose yourself—compose yourself, my dearest child!” reiterated her father. “I never heard you speak in this queer way before—I am really afraid, my child, I have asked too much of you!”

Lady Rosa looked up into his face as she heard these words, and the look was different from any her countenance had heretofore exhibited; it was more composed, more collected, more inquiring. She almost even smiled to perceive how totally incapable he was of comprehending her in her new character—her present exaltation—for it is a curious fact, but it is one, that there is no sedative in all the pharmacopœia of such efficacy, in violent mental excitement, as seeing calm and unaffected want of sympathy in the by-standers.—She presently rose from her seat—pressed her lips upon his forehead—and, merely saying, “ You will find me firm—and—you may say so !” she withdrew to her own apartment.

And she did continue firm !—nay, more, she continued calm; or, at least, her outward seeming might be called such; and, it being settled that the marriage was to be celebrated the day but one succeeding that on which her doom was announced to her, she made but two requests—one that no human being was to be informed of this her second engagement with Sir Charles Wilton until the moment before the ceremony should take place—the other, that she should be spared the sight of him till then. To the first request her father yielded but too gladly, and probably from the same motive which induced her to make it—namely in order to prevent any conversation between her and Hubert on

the subject, which, in eliciting her feelings, would certainly lead him to oppose it—and, respecting the second, her decision admitted of no appeal. She could not, indeed, disguise from either Hubert or Lucy Kelly that another blow had fallen upon her spirit; but while Hubert feared, surmised, and questioned whether it was through the same mysterious agency that was weighing on their father, she eluded his inquiries by promises that they would all be answered very soon.

And the day came—the chill, cold, bleak wedding-day!

Sir Charles and Lord Lisbrian had made all the preparations that were deemed absolutely necessary; and Hubert and Lucy were roused from their slumbers—the one by Lord Lisbrian, the other by Lady Rosa herself—and told to prepare to escort the bride to church!

Hubert sprang wildly from his couch, as if he had guessed all in the one word, and rushed, without uttering a syllable, to the chamber of his sister. Apparently she anticipated his visit, for her door was locked, and she refused all his entreaties for admission.

“But what is the meaning of it all, my dearest Lady Rosa?” Lucy Kelly, who could not be excluded, asked, as the bride arrayed herself in her

deepest mourning robes. "And you look so deadly pale, and feel so cold and queer!"

"Silly Lucy! do you not yet know that a bride always looks agitated?" Lady Rosa answered; but neither smile or tell-tale blush betrayed the struggling happiness.

"But why did you keep it so secret?" continued Lucy.

"Don't you know that is another privilege of brides, my child? And now, are you ready? for I am,—though, wait one moment!—and—Boothe, mix me a little more hartshorn!" Boothe, looking not the least scared of the party, did as she was desired; but, drawing Lucy aside, whispered her to use her influence to prevail on the bride to put off her mourning dress for even half an hour, adding, "There's a most lovely white figured silk just hanging in the very front of the wardrobe, and her white bonnet just at my hand, that would do elegantly!" and poor little Lucy repeated the request.

Lady Rosa smiled at last; but it was such a strange, sad, expressive smile, that both Lucy and Boothe stepped a pace back, as if to deprecate it, and then exchanged a terrified glance with each other. Lady Rosa saw the glance. "Boothe," she said, "I thought you had been more skilled in your craft! it is not the fashion now for brides to dress in white." And she proceeded to leave the room.

“Oh, Miss Kelly, there’s something wrong!” cried poor Boothe, wringing her hands in agony. “Till this minute I tried to persuade myself that it was the circumstances of the family that made my lady keep her marriage a secret; but I see plainly now there’s more than that!” At that instant Lady Rosa turned hastily back. It might have been supposed she was already as pale as she could be—but there are degrees till death itself is triumphant. She had heard Sir Charles Wilton’s voice; and, sinking, shuddering, into a chair, she ordered Boothe to go and watch until her father and brother were ready to step into the carriage, and then to let her know.

She was not kept waiting long; both Lord Lisbrian and his son came to escort her down stairs; and as she took an arm of each, even at that moment, and at every risk, her brother whispered, as Lucy Kelly had done, “Rosa, my dearest sister, what is the meaning of all this?—tell me at least that it is with your own free will!” and he attempted to stop her.

“Why should you doubt it?” she asked, drawing him on; and it was her first attempt at deception; but the hollow, hysteric laugh that accompanied it might well have neutralized, if not totally effaced it.

There was no time to analyse it, however, for they were already in the hall; and, in a minute more, Lord Lisbrian, although pale, silent, and tottering

himself, had lifted her into the carriage, and, handing in the weeping Lucy after her, shut the door, and Sir Charles Wilton gave the order "to St. George's Church!"

And at St. George's Church they all arrived, without accident or interruption—and she was lifted out again—for by this time she seemed scarcely to retain a spark of life.

Perhaps, had the whole matter commenced now, Lord Lisbrian would have decided to have borne all,—ay, even dishonoured life itself,—rather than have reduced her to such a state.—But there are visionary fetters which surround the weak, the wavering, and the guilty, and prevent them from taking the easy, backward step which would remedy all, while they hurry on to that which they know to be inevitable destruction!

She was supported up the aisle; and once more Hubert whispered his inquiry—but, like some bird, that has been coerced to do violence to its nature by uttering one single sentence, and, in scarcely more intelligible accents, she repeated,—“Can you doubt it?” and, at last at the altar, he consigned her to the support of Sir Charles Wilton! A slight, subdued shudder alone gave notice that she was conscious of the change, and she did not reject his supporting arm!

The clergyman looked upon the mourning party

for a moment in somewhat of astonishment ; but, as if reading in that very circumstance the solution of the sadness and silence, he opened the prayer-book, and had proceeded about half way through the first opening address, when, through that church—in which a pin might have been heard to fall—and, in full and astounding contrast to his own deep, solemn, gentlemanly tones, the words, “ Whisht, whisht ! for God’s sake, stop one moment ! and give me time to brathe ! ” were screamed at the pitch of an exhausted, vulgar, Irish voice—and the guardian angel of the family—though still in the unimposing mortal form of Michael Tracey, once more stood before them !

It is utterly impossible to describe the effect of such an interruption at such a moment. Never, at any period of his life, had Tracey appeared to more personal disadvantage,—pale, haggard, anxious, unkempt, unshaven, and travel-soiled, with the memorable red-cotton handkerchief wiping his streaming brow, and gasping as if in danger of instant suffocation. The clergyman would at once have ordered him to be turned out, or secured, as some escaped maniac, had not the simultaneous exclamation of his name by Lord Lisbrian, his son, and Lucy Kelly and the conscious start of Sir Charles Wilton, shewn that he was at least no stranger to the party. Lady Rosa alone shewed no emotion

at his appearance ; but, sinking on the steps, and supporting herself against the rails of the altar, she seemed passively to wait for whatever might ensue. Lord Lisbrian was the first to ask an explanation of the interruption.

“Intherruption ! oh, Lord ! my Lord !” Tracey was now able to gasp out ; “and is that what you call stoppin’ your daughter from takin’ another woman’s husband ?” Again Lady Rosa formed the only exception to an universal exclamation ; and Sir Charles made an indignant stride towards Tracey. He dexterously slipped behind Hubert.

“Stop him ! hould him, my Lord !” he said to Lord Lisbrian ; “for, faith, I’m not able to sthruggle with him now, if I was at any time ; but it’s the thruth what I’m tellin’ you. Ah, keep yourself quiet, you bad, foolish man !” he said, as Sir Charles made another step towards him. “Sure your wife, little Ellen O’Shaughnessy, is in the carriage at the door, with your marriage lines in her pocket !” and as it proved to be as Tracey said, we shall, in order to give the necessary explanations of what we hope was an unexpected circumstance, go back to the time of his leaving Lisbrian Castle to repair to Glasgow in pursuit of the head-clerk.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN order to proceed systematically, it will be necessary to retrace our steps to the moment when Steen, Lord Lisbrian's head-clerk, dispatched his letters to Miss O'Shaughnessy and Bartley, with directions to meet him at Glasgow. Never doubting for a moment the young lady's joyful acquiescence in his scheme, he himself took his departure from London almost at the same instant, and moving about from place to place, as he thought best calculated to elude the pursuit he anticipated, he managed so as to arrive at Glasgow about the time he had directed them to expect him there. The place he had appointed for their meeting was at a petty inn in an old and obscure street, kept by a relative of his mother, a fat old widow, who, with four maiden daughters, the youngest past her prime, had long founded high hopes on the weel-

doing clerk, who, occasionally, visited them in his professional tours, and never failed, on such occasions, to evince very praiseworthy family feeling. As to how they might receive him now, with the fair additional claim on their cousinship, he felt some instinctive misgivings, which, however, had only led him to suppress that part of his story in his letter, and to trust to his eloquence for pardon afterwards.

Accordingly, as soon as the noisy and obstreperous demonstrations of welcome had somewhat subsided he ventured to inquire if a gentleman and lady had arrived there inquiring for "Mr. Carpenter." "Leddy! Na, na, nae led dy; but a wheen men there was—" the hostess and her four daughters were proceeding to reply together, when all further explanations were cut short by Tracey himself, and two stout constables, rushing out of a room off the hall—through the door of which they had heard what passed—and into which they had been shewn by the courteous landlady as persons who had business with a Mr. Carpenter, who was to arrive that evening at her house—such being the name Steen had given to Mr. Bartley in his letter.

Fearful was the scene which ensued. Steen himself, indeed, offered not the slightest resistance; but, turning as pale as death, delivered up his papers and portmanteau, which, till then, he had held

fast in his hand, without uttering a word; but his very meekness and submission, no matter from what cause proceeding, seemed only to inflame his fair relatives the more against his aggressors; and absolutely stunning and terrifying poor Tracey with abuse, not one word in ten of which he understood, it was only Steen's entreaties, that they would not ruin him beyond redemption, that prevented their fixing in his face the nails and teeth they ostentatiously displayed to his probably still greater horror.

As soon as Steen had succeeded in procuring some degree of quiet, and just as the constables were about to lead him to the gaol, where he was informed he was to spend the night, previous to being sent next day to London, he turned to Tracey, and asked him, in a whisper, if Miss O'Shaughnessy was arrived. Poor Tracey, ever unwilling to give pain, and never goaded to it except by an imperative sense of duty, answered, ambiguously, that she was safe at home, and evaded giving him the further information that would, he supposed, have so cruelly aggravated his present suffering. "Then that knave and idiot, Bartley, has betrayed me!" he exclaimed, seeming to recover some feelings of manhood; "but if I swing for it, I'll have my revenge!"

"Heaven save us! Whisht, man!" said Tracey,

crossing himself, though scarcely able to move or speak, between the terror, grief, agitation, sea-sickness, and consequent starvation, he had undergone of late. "It's of other things besides your rivinges you ought to be thinking now !"

"Ay?" asked Steen, with a grim smile; "it will take a thing or two more than this to put them out of my head, for all that! Never mind it, Tracey, my lad! I owe you a turn yourself; and you may depend upon it you shall see me, dead or alive, before long, to pay you!" And poor Tracey, wholly overcome by all this indignation evinced by the living, and threatened by the dead,—in addition to all his previous sufferings,—felt his head begin to reel, and his steps to totter,—and, the next moment he would have fallen, in a fainting-fit, to the ground, if he had not been caught and supported by the stout arms of the youngest and fairest of the sisterhood.

There is a merciful provision of nature that they who are destined to be the soothers and attendants in sickness and sorrow seldom retain resentment in the presence of either; and, in compliance with this law, those who, the moment before, seemed ready to inflict on poor Tracey even worse than what had befallen him, were now even emulous in their efforts to relieve him. They carried him back into the very parlour whence he had, a few mo-

ments before, pounced on his prey, and there depositing him on a bed, ingeniously contrived in a nook in the old wall, and concealed by a skreen, which, if carefully examined, might, in its miscellaneous decorations, have decided many a disputed date on which estates have been lost and won—the mother, directing the fair spinsters to turn away their faces, proceeded to disincumber him of his coat and neck-cloth, which, with the other means usually resorted to in similar cases, soon succeeded in restoring him to something approaching to animation. But here their charity ended.

“He’ll do vera weel noo—he’ll do weel eneugh noo,” said the parent; “let him bide a wee there, and he’ll soon be able, I’ll engage, to finish his pratty business, and to leave a hoose whar he’s no that welcome! Come yere wa, lassies!” And sweeping them out before her, she shut the door as a sort of guarantee that the prisoner could not thus escape with any of the bed-clothes, without their hearing him; for, ignorant of the fact that bite or sup had not passed Tracey’s lips since he left Dublin in the packet for Glasgow, she had no hopes of the house “being the better of him” in that way. Indeed, such was the state of exhaustion to which he was now reduced, mind and body, that he was himself unable to account for it; and, yielding, without resistance, to the drowsiness that was now

creeping over him, he forgot his sufferings and sorrows for a time in a sound sleep.

He might have been sleeping about an hour when he was suddenly startled into consciousness by the opening of the room-door, with that peculiar bustle and alacrity which it seems the natural instinct of hotel-keepers, of whatever grade, to manifest in ushering in distinguished guests, and by a furtive and hasty drag at the screen, in order to render the concealment of the bed more complete than had been deemed necessary at his unceremonious coucher. Placing lights upon the table, the landlady again withdrew; and Tracey, rather soothed than annoyed by finding himself no longer in darkness and solitude, was about to doze again, without a conjecture as to the gender or number of his companions, when both pieces of information were gratuitously forced upon him, with some slight alterations not particularly lulling,—the first, by the masculine and impatient strides of high-heeled boots, along the uncarpeted floor, to and from the corner in which he lay perdu; and the second, by these words, evidently proceeding from the body to which the legs that wore the boots belonged.

“By Heavens above, this is too bad! to be forestalled at every step by that drivelling idiot, Tracey! For his doing I know it is, the state in which

we have just met Steen. Let him beware of me, however! for if I can but once lay my eyes upon him, he'll never interfere with me again in this world, whatever he may do in the next! But now, my dear—hem!—as you see that the object of your journey has failed—for, I think, it would surpass your ingenuity to get access to poor Steen now—and as, if you could, they have, of course, secured whatever money and papers he had with him—I think your best plan is to return forthwith to Ireland!”

“How do you mean, Sir Charles? Surely not until—in short, we are now in Scotland, and you will not delay to fulfil your promise?” were the questions returned in mincing accents of alarm, which Tracey in vain endeavoured to persuade himself he did not recognise; while a variety of emotions, added to bodily exhaustion, prevented him from giving further intimation of his presence than by a faint groan which was effectually drowned in the gentleman's reply.

“Pooh! my dear, you know that promise was conditional on your succeeding in securing Steen's papers for me; but now, I assure you, you would be most damnably in my way; besides, I can tell you, if I fail in this matter, you would have little cause to congratulate yourself on being my wife; as it is, nobody will be a bit the wiser about your little escapade,—they all know, in your own neigh-

bourhood, that you were to have been married to this fellow, and nothing could have been more natural than that you should endeavour to pursue him, you know ; and I offered you my escort, that's all, if even that is known—which need not be, if you manage properly,—so make no silly fuss about it now, there's a good girl ! for you will only annoy me, and it cannot avail ; and just go quietly back, and I will see you off myself ; and if nothing else will satisfy you, you can call yourself Mrs. Steen ever after, or Lady Wilton, if you prefer it !” But Tracey could endure no more, and now sent forth such a groan as caused Sir Charles Wilton to rush towards the place whence it proceeded—dash aside the screen—and, it is hard to say what the consequences of his violence at the moment might have been to one in Tracey's exhausted state, but that the terrifying shrieks, which Miss O'Shaughnessy had simultaneously set up, brought not only every member of the family, but every accidental stranger in the house, flocking into the room to learn the cause of them.

Questions were, of course, poured forth on all sides, which nobody was able to answer ; until, at last, Sir Charles Wilton, grinding his teeth, and trembling with passion, turned to the landlady and exclaimed, “ What is the meaning of this ? I insist upon knowing the reason of this person being con-

cealed in the room into which I was shewn, or how he comes to be here at all?"

Mrs. M'Larty, who, in her delight and astonishment at receiving guests of such unusual promise as Sir Charles and his fair companion, had deemed it better to trust to providence for getting Tracey smuggled away while they should go to examine bedrooms, should they purpose remaining, or to his lying quiet, should they not, than to throw any impediment in the way of their entering at all into the only sitting-room her house afforded, endeavoured now to make her apologies by falling foul of Tracey; and, accordingly, rushing angrily towards the bed, she began, "Why, but ye get up oot o' that, and tak yersel awa'? Dinna ye hear what the gentleman's sayin'? and I'll be caution ye're weel eneugh noo to gang elsewhar and mak yer broils and turmoils! Get up, if ye please, and tak yoursel off! this room is let to this good gentleman and ledly."

And poor Tracey, equally unable to resist or to obey, was just about to give himself up in despair, when an unexpected auxiliary, in his behalf, appeared in the person of Mr. Donaldson, the magistrate to whom he had applied on his arrival in Glasgow for the warrant against Steen, and who, hearing from the constables, who went to deliver to him the papers found on the prisoner, of the state

in which they left Tracey, and the treatment he was likely to experience at the hands of Mrs. M'Larty and her daughters, hastened thither to offer his assistance and protection to the stranger, whose unsophisticated and zealous faithfulness had already interested him in his favour.

No sooner did Tracey see him enter the room than, raising himself on the couch, he cried out, "Oh, blessed be God for that sight! Oh, Sir, aren't you Mither O'Donnell the magistrate that I was with a while ago? Oh, Sir, protect me! I have just senses enough left to know I'm little better than a fool this minute! but I'm not always so, Sir, indeed—though never to say a Solomon, as you may guess by the business I am entrusted with! but now I'm ather dyin' or goin' out o' my mind—and it's a shockin' thought in a strange country, without one belonging to me. Well! sure, thank God, I got the business done first!" and the poor little man dropped his now throbbing head between his hands. The worthy magistrate looked sternly round, and inquired what treatment had reduced him to this state.

"Treatement!" Mrs. M'Larty repeated. "No; but it's he has treated and sorted us, I trow!—comin' and first lyin' in wait like a roarin' lion, and seizin' our cousin in our vera house for a welcome! and neist raisin the town about our lugs! I'm sure, for

my part, I wouldn't wonder if some one of the crowds rushin' in and out took the opportunity to whip off ane o' the bit lassies !"

"But until that happens, Ma'am," said the magistrate, drily, "I see no reason you have to complain of this gentleman for doing his duty ; and I desire to know who has dared to lay violent hands on him ?"

"Violent hands !—and is that my thanks for carryin' him intil the bed, and wi' my own hands tackin' aff his coat and cravat when he fainted for the scaur o' poor Steen sayin' his ghost shuld visit him !"

"It's throe ! it's throe ! what she says, Sir !" Tracey now earnestly said. "I told you I am all but gone, mind and body ; and I have nothin' to complain of against these people if they will only let me have a room and quiet—I have manes to reward them." And again, as if the exertion of uttering these few words was too much for him, his head dropped upon his breast.

"You shall not reward them, by heaven !" said the magistrate. "You shall come home with me ; and I have a kind wife and daughter who will think it no trouble to take care of you till you are better." But before Tracey could make any reply to this benevolent proposal, Sir Charles Wilton, who had hitherto hung back in the hope of something escaping which might help him to the accomplish-

ment of his object, and now believing the opportunity was actually within his grasp, if he could but seize it, advanced, with Miss O'Shaughnessy clinging closely to his arm, and making a respectful salutation to the magistrate, he said, "Allow me, Sir, to endeavour to throw some little light upon this business, in justice to all parties. I am a friend of this gentleman's,"—(here Tracey groaned, but it was attributed to the pain in his head,)—"and arriving here accidentally, without any idea of meeting him, I engaged this apartment, and, to my surprise, found, after I had been some time in it, that it was already occupied by this gentleman. The fact is, although our good hostess, conceiving she has some cause for displeasure against Mr. Tracey, speaks rather roughly, I understand she really has not another unoccupied room in the house. However, sooner than that my poor friend should be removed in his present state—which, indeed, with all respect for your kindness and judgment, might, I think, be dangerous—I shall cheerfully resign my claim to this apartment in his favour, and this lady and I, being a good deal fatigued, and also utter strangers here, will request permission to pass the night in any garret or cellar where our hostess can stow us." And taking off his hat, which in the confusion he had not yet done, he said, "I am Sir Charles Wilton!"

This announcement did, as it ought, produce

some effect on Mr. Donaldson, who bowed respectfully in return, gave his own name and calling—and, after a moment's hesitation, said, "And this lady, Sir—may I inquire whether she is your wife or sister? for our house, I am sorry to say, is so confined, that—" For a moment Sir Charles hesitated also; but the bait was too close and tempting; the risk too vague and remote, to one not skilled in the niceties of the law; and—though last, not least—Tracey's eyes were too anxiously fixed on him to suffer him to follow the dictates of his wishes;—so, with a very slight internal effort, and a very bland and gracious smile, he answered, "Yes, Sir; this lady is my wife. Allow me to present you to Lady Wilton, Mr. Donaldson!"

The magistrate bowed, and the lady curtseyed, with admirable self-possession, while Tracey muttered, though so indistinctly that no one noticed it, "Blessed be God for that hearin' at any rate! for, though I don't rightly know the Scotch law for marriage, I always heard it was some *slight-a-hand work!*"

"Then, in that case, Sir," said the magistrate, "if Mrs. M'Larty will act the part of a Christian and a respectable publican by this gentleman," looking to Tracey, "for whom I shall be answerable—as she will be to me for his comfort—perhaps the best way would be for him to remain undis-

turbed here, and for you and your lady to do me the honour of accompanying me to my poor house, and accepting the best accommodation it can afford, for this night." And turning from Sir Charles's disclaiming acceptance of the proffered hospitality, he asked Tracey if he did not conceive the arrangement would be that most comfortable for him. Tracey, who really felt unequal to the exertion of moving, without knowing himself how much of it proceeded from starvation, and feeling that he had the means of amply satisfying Mrs. M'Larty for her forced hospitality, cheerfully acceded to the plan, and all seemed about to be arranged almost as Sir Charles Wilton would have prayed, on arriving in Glasgow, that it might be, when he, in the graciousness of triumph, approached to Tracey, and pressing his hand with cordial warmth, turned to the landlady, and said, "I entreat, Ma'am, that any attention you would have bestowed on me you will oblige me by transferring to this gentleman!" But he overshot the mark.

"There's something wrong! I'm goin' to be bit!" Tracey instantly said to himself, with the instinct of danger; and, in his present condition not being able at once to collect his thoughts, the last of the party was disappearing from the room, when he suddenly shouted, or rather shrieked out in his extremity, "Oh, magisthrate! Mither O'Donnell!"

Sir! will you come back for one moment, if you please!"

Mr. Donaldson immediately returned, although Sir Charles endeavoured to prevent him; and then, Tracey, sitting bolt upright in the bed, his hair standing nearly as upright on his head, and his ghastly face looking wild with sudden alarm, stretched out his hand to draw him close to him.

Mr. Donaldson, however, drew back, really apprehensive that he was seized with a fit of delirium.

"Ah! come here, Sir, one minute, and God bless you!" Tracey said, eagerly. "What are you afraid of? sure I couldn't have the fever all in a minute?"

"Indeed, my good Sir, I consider it no favour whatever," said the magistrate. "But—"

"But what else?" asked Tracey, in astonishment. "However, if you have any objection, let every one else leave the room for one minute, 'till I ask you one question!" and this he said so earnestly, that Mr. Donaldson complied with his request; and the room was presently left to themselves. "Have you the papers safe, Sir?" Tracey immediately asked, in a low, emphatic tone.

"What papers?" said the magistrate, startled for a moment by his manner, look, and tone—then continued, "Oh! those found on the prisoner? of course I have."

"Well, keep them so, Sir—that's all!" and he nodded his head sagaciously.

The magistrate stared. "Well, really, Sir," he said, "I think it was hardly necessary to call me back into the room, and turn every one else out of it, to give me a hint upon so obvious a part of my duty!"

"Now God bless you, Sir, and don't you get affronted with me, too! for, maybe, I have more reasons for what I say than you think!"

The magistrate now began to look very serious. "If you, Sir, know anything of which I ought to be informed, and conceal it from me, you will be the responsible person for whatever consequences may ensue."

"And that's true, too," Tracey said, musingly. "Well, then, if that be it, Sir, I tell you to have an eye to that lad you're bringing home with you!"

"I do not understand you, Sir," said the magistrate. "You surely know him to be the person he represents himself to be?—he is a friend of yours?"

"Sir Charles Wilton he is, no doubt," Tracey answered; "but friend of mine he is not, nor doesn't like a bone in my skin: sure it was running a race we came here to-night—only I won it, thanks be to God!"

"Really, Sir," said Mr. Donaldson, "if you do not think that you are disordered by your illness,

I must entreat of you to endeavour to be more explicit—the night is wearing away, and though I have sent a messenger to my house, I do not wish to delay longer than is necessary.”

“ Whethen, see, Sir! I do not think I’m ravín’—which is what I suppose you mane—but now that the room is cooler and quieter, and that my sleep is fairly shook off, it’s what I think I’m faintin’ for want of food, not having put one morsel inside my lips these two days and two nights. Oh, Sir, would you call to them to get me something!—anything!—immadiently! Now that I once thought of it, I find I’m starvin’! but come back again, Sir, if you plase,” he added, as the gentleman went to the door to order some toast and negus, and to request of the landlady to shew Sir Charles and Lady Wilton into some apartment where they might remain undisturbed for the few minutes he was unavoidably detained.

Tracey heard the orders, and called out, “ Oh, God bless you, Sir! and don’t let her wait to make toast! I’d ate a bit of a dead dog this minute, with thanks! Oh, Sir, let her bring me anything at all that she can get at wonst,—and as for nagus, or liquor of any kind, inside my lips *it* never goes again on an empty stomach!—oh, no! I paid enough for that wonst, and a burnt child dreads the fire.”

Accordingly, they brought him a piece of crust, at

Mr. Donaldson's desire, while preparing something more substantial, which, as he eagerly devoured, he went on, "I'm not, then, ravin', thanks be to the Almighty! but feel getting quite well now, and my senses clearing finely! and now that they are, another thought comes across me, and I'm not at all sure that it's trating your kindness rightly not to tell you!"

"I must certainly say, that for every reason, and in every point of view, you ought not to conceal from me anything it imports me to know," the magistrate said, with grave dignity.

"Oh, well; still, for all that, I must think of myself for a little minute, for fear it's in another quirk of quareness I am now. Sure, how do I know, after all,—and, at any rate, I'll begin with telling you that I greatly misdoubt Sir Charles Wilton—he's a quare man, to say the laste—and, if I were you, I wouldn't so much as let him nor his colleen into the room where I had the papers, even under lock and kay!"

"What on earth do you mean by his colleen?"

"Ay, there it is!" said poor Tracey, in heartfelt perplexity and doubt. "I'm afeard you said you had a wife and daughter, Sir?"

"Afraid? I did say so! But why are you afraid?"

"Because if you hadn't, what would it signify, Sir? But as you have, I think I ought to tell you,—

I am afeard I ought—considering your kindness. Well, Sir, will you give me your word to make no use whatever of what I'm goin' to say?"

"Upon my word, Sir, with such a proviso, I think you may as well keep the information to yourself!"

"Why, Sir? Ooh, *improper* use, I mane, Sir!"

"That, Sir, is a condition as unnecessary on the other hand."

"Oh, well, God bless you now, Sir, and don't be takin' me up short! I'm never a very good spaker at the best of times; but, indeed, it'll take more food to make my poor head even what it usu'llly is! I wonder what she's about with it? But what I mane, Sir, is, that you would never, to your dyin' day, say anything to prejudice the girl."

"To prejudice what girl? and against whom, or what? Here, I say! Mrs. M'Larty!" Mr. Donaldson called out, "are you bringing the chop?—and indeed, Sir, you had better take a little negus."

But on this point Tracey was immovable; and, considering within himself, that, after all, he was only about to tell what must in time be known, after a few more earnest exhortations to Mr. Donaldson not to say or do anything to the prejudice of Miss O'Shaughnessy's character, he said, "Whethen, this is it, Sir—you are yourself the only

man living this night that can tell whether she is Lady Wilton, or what she is!"

"Here! I say, why do you not bring the food?" Mr. Donaldson called out again, adding, "Indeed, Sir, I think we had better suspend any further conversation until you have satisfied your hunger, as you say that will—ah, hem!"

"Set my brain to rights?" Tracey asked, smiling at the worthy magistrate's delicate hesitation; "but it's not all out as bad as you think, Sir—this is what I mane—that time he introduced her to you as Lady Wilton is ather a Scotch marriage, or she may go whistle for the title!"

And then, at the magistrate's request, he related the circumstances of the case pretty much as he believed them to be; all that he intended, out of delicacy to the parties, to conceal, "coming out," as he said, "in spite of him, just as water bubbles up when you break the ice."

Nothing could equal the indignation of Mr. Donaldson when he understood the advantage that it appeared Sir Charles Wilton was about to take of his hospitality and kindness; and, as low as his opinion of him now fell, so much in proportion poor Tracey rose in his estimation.

Through the various, and frequently ludicrous, struggles of the latter, between instinctive sense of

right, and an uncultivated mind, he detected the kindest feelings, apparently incapable of being influenced by any selfish or interested motive whatever. He seemed to the worthy Scotchman—as, in fact, he was—a creature living for the good of others, without knowing or thinking that it was so, and either compelling, coaxing, or bungling everything to right by the mere effects of his own simple rectitude.

Once more Mr. Donaldson invited him to accompany him home, as receiving Sir Charles was now out of the question; but Tracey answered, “Oh no, Sir! no,—good look to you, and say not a word more about that! I’m for ever and ever obliged to you,—and thank God for puttin’ you in my way! but it would be crule to the poor girl, to say nothin’ of Sir Charles himself, and would look ugly for me to profit by what I have told you agin them; indeed, any advantage that turns up that way never does me good, and I never like to take it for fear it was the divil hid it hid as a bait for me; and that, like the mouse and the toasted cheese, I smelt it though I didn’t see it; so, if you plase, you’ll just have the great kindness to spake to the woman of the house instead, and tell her to give the best room she has to Sir Charles, and put me any where that I can get my night’s rest in pace, and quiet, and safety, Sir,—say safety, if you plase—

with a lock and key to my door, that he may not get in at me again. And now I feel so different, Sir, with them lovely chops, that, with God's assistance, I'll be well able to start for home in the morning; and, indeed, of the two, since I have to cross the dirty, weary say again, I'd rather it was before the last bout is well over with me, not to make two bites of a cherry!"

But previously to summoning Mrs. M'Larty, the magistrate wrote a note to this effect. "Mr. Donaldson presents his compliments, and is sorry to be under the necessity of declining the honour intended him by Sir Charles Wilton;" which then delivering to her, and reiterating his charges in favour of Tracey, which the chops and negus disposed her now to listen to attentively, he was bidding him good night, with a request to see him at breakfast next morning, when Tracey, with an anxious, rueful countenance, whispered, "But you haven't told me yet, Sir, if they are man and wife? and though I'm ill able for a battle now, I wouldn't lave her in his claws if I thought they woren't, and that she'd back me to get away from him."

The magistrate assured him he might make his mind easy on that subject if the lady had even been his daughter or sister.

But Tracey shouted at the idea, "No, no, Sir! beggin' your pardon"—he said; "I'd be long sorry

to see any female that deserved better put off with that! but, I'm sorry to say, if it makes Ellen O'Shaughnessy his lawful wife, there's no more to be said!" and so they parted for the night. And as Tracey heard of no further claims on the part of Sir Charles Wilton for the room, he was soon again buried in a deep and oblivious slumber, from which he only wakened to find it was so late in the following day, that he had not a moment left to pay the visit which Mr. Donaldson had requested, and was just preparing to set out on his homeward journey, when, to his great dismay, he was informed that the Irish lady, who had arrived the evening before, had sent to request that she might be permitted to speak a few words with him as soon as possible. And, as soon as it was deemed possible, Miss O'Shaughnessy made her appearance—and in all the grief and despair that a situation such as hers must necessarily inspire, she informed him that Sir Charles, on receiving Mr. Donaldson's note, had stormed about the room for a few moments—ground his teeth, as he always did in angry meditation—finally flung her his pocket-book—told her to throw herself upon the protection of Tracey in the morning—and, pretending to the people of the house that he meant to return, had rushed into the street, and never re-appeared!

Unfortunate Tracey groaned in spirit at the new

task which he saw had devolved upon him ; but, as if absolutely ignorant that he had even the power to decline it, he permitted no further evidence of his annoyance to escape than the involuntary groan ; and, telling her how much better were her future prospects than she deserved, he once more changed his plans, and giving up the hope of leaving Glasgow that day, repaired to Mr. Donaldson to collect what information he could afford him respecting the mode of proceeding Miss O'Shaughnessy should adopt in order to have her claims established.

Mr. Donaldson was able to give him full instructions ; and, furnishing him with the first essential to rendering them of use, a certificate of Sir Charles's acknowledgment before him, and several other witnesses, of the young lady as his wife, she and Tracey were early next morning whirling away in one of the public coaches to Port Patrick, each agreeing to avoid as much of the sea as might be possible.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Tracey, and Miss O'Shaughnessy, under his safe escort, arrived in the neighbourhood of Lisbrian, his first steps were to deliver her up to the custody of her parents, to put into their hands the certificate of her marriage, and to advise them to lose no time in prosecuting their claims upon Sir Charles Wilton. But it was a strange neighbourhood that in which Lisbrian lay. In proportion as ready money was scarce amongst the inhabitants, they believed those who possessed it to be omnipotent, and, in their own phrase, to "carry the world before them." Even the break-up in Lisbrian castle had served to terrify and mystify them; and the idea of suing Sir Charles Wilton, the English baronet, whose sisters were Lady Rosa's friends, to acknowledge their Ellen, the fiancée of the clerk,

as Lady Wilton, was a degree above even the O'Shaughnessys, whose pride consisted much more in speaking than in acting—as pride without foundation always does; and so, having the certificate to shew to all intimate friends, and Tracey's word, which they knew to be scarcely less esteemed, to take a wider range, they determined to call their daughter Lady Wilton without any further fuss; and as, after all, to be called “my Lady” even by the servants was the grand object of her girlish ambition, she cheerfully acceded to the plan, having, in the course of their journey and their parting, seen enough of Sir Charles Wilton to make her extremely glad to be *quitte pour la peur* of spending her life with him. Putting on mourning for his sister filled up the measure of her exultation.

This point decided, Tracey's next step was to Rochford's lodgings in Lisbrian, where not finding him, and unable to endure the anxiety that he felt to talk over all his own marvellous adventures, and hear of all that had happened to those in whom his simple affections were bound up, from so kind and sympathizing a friend, he went on to Still-Organ Abbey, whither he learned he had just returned from a short tour, and where he knew the news he had to impart would of itself have made him welcome.

For some minutes after Rochford joined him, in a room where he had the privilege of receiving any

guest who sought himself alone, Tracey was too much taken up in listening and relating to remark the melancholy change that had taken place in the young man's appearance. It was as if years had passed over him, and years of suffering and of sorrow ; and it was on perceiving how little pleasure he evinced in the success of Tracey's mission, in which he had appeared so much interested, that Tracey's attention was first attracted to this change. Stopping suddenly short, just as he was about to enter on the history of Sir Charles Wilton—

“ Whethen, what's the matter with you, Sir ? ” he inquired, with anxiety ; “ sure it's not possible that any new misfortune can have happened ? unless, indeed, it's that poor young lady's death, which surely was terrifying enough, considering how alive and live-like she was—and no one to know the cause of it ! Indeed, my own heart sunk within me when I hard it ; and would have been worse, only for all the rest I had to think of. But, sure, it can't be that, Sir, entirely, that has made such a havoc in you ? ”

“ Havoc ? no—yes—I did not know any havoc, as you call it, was visible ; but it was an awful and melancholy occurrence ! ” and he pressed his hand over his eyes—for he had only heard of Miss Wilton's death a few hours before.

“ It was ! it was, Sir, surely ; and no one ought to

be more shocked than myself, for she honoured me greatly—greatly entirely !” And Tracey seemed to participate in Rochford’s emotion.

“ You know, I suppose, that Lady Rosa L’Estrange is to be married in a day or two ?” was Rochford’s next observation.

Tracey sprang from his chair. “ To Lord Hali-
more ?” he exclaimed ; for even in the few hours he had been at the castle he had heard the surmises to that effect.

“ No ; to Sir Charles Wilton.”

Poor Tracey’s nerves had been so much shattered of late that he was fast acquiring the feminine habit of screaming, or rather shouting. He practised it now with great effect. “ Whigh ! what ?” he gasped out at last ; for he was apt to lose his breath in any violent emotion. “ What, beggin’ your pardon, could put such a thought as that into your head ?” Rochford calmly informed him that his father had just had a letter from Sir Charles Wilton himself, assuring him of the fact ; and that the sudden departure of Lady Rosa had given all the necessary corroboration to the assertion. Tracey caught Rochford by the arm—and, turning as pale as death, whispered, “ What day of the week or month is this ?”

“ Thursday, the 30th,” Rochford said.

“ And what day were they to be married ?” Tra-

cey again asked, in the same hissing accents. This Rochford could not tell; for he had turned heart-sick from the tone of exultation in which his father had communicated the circumstance to him, and had listened to no particulars.

Tracey let go his arm, which he had hitherto held in a nervous gripe, and making some rapid calculation on his fingers—"Come with me! come with me this very moment to London, Misther Rochford," he said, hurriedly, "and we may save her yet!"

"What in the world do you mean, Tracey? Are you mad?"

"No, Sir; nor ravin' nather; for I got a good male at the O'Shaughnessy's, thanks be to God—as it will save us time now—for I know you wont mind atin', Misther Rochford, when I tell you that Sir Charles is a married man as sure as you are not!"

It was now Rochford's turn to start; but a very few words served to convince him of a fact he was so willing to believe; and now perceiving clearly the whole tissue of villany on one side, and cowardice on the other, to which the lovely girl he adored was about to be sacrificed, he gave but one moment to an agonized sensation of shame for his father's part in the transaction, and, hurrying Tracey off to announce to the O'Shaughnessys, that, if they would prevent wide spreading crime, misery, and

destruction, Lady Wilton must consent to accompany him and Tracey instantly to London, with her marriage certificate—he promised to call in his own travelling chariot for her and Tracey, at Milan Hall, as soon as it was possible to procure horses for the purpose.

Tracey, as may be imagined, waited for no second orders, but, merely muttering, “ Well, I b’lieve in the whirlin’ of the world at last ! and that I’m goin’ to be like it myself for the rest of my life,” galloped away, and contrived to place the daughter’s share in the matter in so important a point of view to the parents, and to repeat her new name so often to herself, with shrewd hints, judiciously dropped, of how far another undisputed marriage would tend to invalidate her right to bear it, that, instead of Rochford having any opposition to overcome on his arrival, he found the family only divided between their gratitude to him for this impending *éclât*, and their anxiety to shew their own conscious dignity, by requesting that “ Lady Wilton might be properly attended ;” to ensure which, a blowsy country wench was scrubbed up from the kitchen pending the interval between Tracey and Rochford’s arrival, and then hoisted up behind the carriage—an infliction to which Rochford submitted more passively than perhaps he might have done upon any other occasion upon earth.

It will readily be supposed that no time was lost upon the road ; and almost the only pause that was made, except such as were absolutely necessary for Lady Wilton's food and sleep, was a hurried visit paid by Rochford to Mr. Clarendon, in passing through Dublin.

"You made a romantic offer," he said, abruptly, as he entered the study, at the hour when he knew Mr. Clarendon received patients at his house, "in a moment of enthusiasm,—will your cooler reason redeem the pledge?"

Clarendon reflected for one moment. "The five thousand pounds!" he exclaimed, his countenance brightening up with sudden recollection, and every feature beaming intelligence and pleasure. "I thought," he said, as he looked up from the order for the money which he was already preparing to write, "I thought I gave you reasons which redeemed me from the charge of romance, except from the worldly and cold-hearted—where would you wish to draw for the money?" Rochford informed him of the sort of authority he wished to have ; and, adding a few scarcely intelligible words, explanatory of the state of affairs, rushed from the house again, and the travellers resumed their journey.

Arrived in London, they drove at once to Lord Lisbrian's house—there was no longer any pretence of secrecy ;—they were informed that the bri-

dal party had that moment set out for St. George's Church.

"Open the door!" said Rochford; and he was let out. "Pursue them, Tracey!" he added, supporting himself by leaning one hand on the carriage window; and, as Tracey called frantically to the postilion to drive on, Rochford turned into Lord Lisbrian's house to wait the event—*not* as a brave man on the eve of execution does—if the accounts we hear are to be relied on.

"How very ill Mr. Rochford looks!" said Lady Wilton, quietly, as they drove away. "Does he? eh! eh!" gasped poor Tracey, with his body so far out of the front window that he was afterwards black and blue from the bumps and concussions he unconsciously received by every jolt, as the horses galloped along in obedience to his frantic exhortations to that effect; and it was the exercise he gave himself in this manner, added to mental anxiety, that sent him, in a few minutes after, foaming and wiping his brow, into the church.

Having now brought back the thread of our narrative to that point, we shall resume it there.

The moment Sir Charles Wilton heard the conclusive words of Tracey, "Your wife is at the door with her certificate in her pocket," conviction of a vague surmise which had already occurred to him, and which had gone further than anything else,

perhaps, towards his determination to involve the interests of the Lisbrian family in his cause, struck at once into his soul ; and, taking up his hat, and walking calmly out of the church, as if to ascertain whether Tracey spoke truth, he no sooner found himself outside the door than he turned the corner, and, stepping into the first conveyance that offered, was soon beyond all pursuit, if pursuit had indeed been meditated.

But nothing was further from the thoughts of any one he left behind him. Lady Rosa, indeed, seemed still in a state of exhaustion, which, rendering her, apparently, indifferent to all that was passing around her, not only damped the joy that would otherwise have been felt at her release, but even excited some alarm for her life or reason.

“ Never mind her ! never mind her ! ” reiterated Lucy Kelly, as she hung fondly and silently over her. “ She’ll be better presently. I know and understand perfectly well what ails her,—the change is too great and sudden—and she is afraid if she gave way at all, she’d give way too much and make a scene ; but if I had her once in her own room, she could just cry nicely there with me ! ”

And although she spoke in an earnest whisper, Lady Rosa heard, and pressed her hand.

“ Ah ! I knew I was right, darling ! wasn’t I ? ” whispered the enraptured Lucy, not waiting now for

solitude to weep herself ; and then, making a sign to them to support Lady Rosa to the carriage, she excluded every one from it but herself ; and the party were just about to return as they came, when Tracey, never betrayed into forgetfulness of kindness, plucked Hubert by the sleeve, and whispered, " What in the world will I do with this unfortunate girl ? for I'm doubtin' that lad has thrown her on my hands again ! "

Hubert repeated the inquiry to Lord Lisbrian, who, as good-natured and as heedless as ever, said, " Oh, bring her to Belgrave Square to be sure, and we'll consider then what is to be done." And the young lady was but too thankful to avail herself of the permission, and chattered away to Hubert—who was now her companion—as if she had been at some spectacle at the theatre, of which she had herself been the author.

Lady Rosa's carriage being the foremost of the three, arrived first ; and when the door was opened, not feeling strong enough to go up stairs without more assistance than Lucy's arm, she went towards the breakfast parlour, while Lucy took the opportunity to fly for some wine and water for her. But a better stimulant to her paralysed energies was there awaiting her.

Rochford had heard the carriage stop—had heard the knock, the opening of the door, and the

entrance of the party—but, feeling that his earthly doom was a second time to be pronounced, through her misery or escape, he had not courage to come forward to meet it, but stood in the middle of the room, with his hands clasped together, and his eyes rivetted on the door, in such prostration of spirit as he had only experienced once in his life before—when the door had closed between him and Lady Rosa, after her rejection of him at Lisbrian Castle.

Such was the object that now met her view as she was about to advance into the room. The first sensation she experienced was a shock—simply a severe bodily shock—and she was obliged to grasp at a chair, to support herself from falling. Rochford did not make an attempt to move towards her, but kept his eyes still rivetted on the door, as if expecting some one else to enter. The other two carriages now drove up in succession, and gave out their occupants—and Rochford strained eye and ear as if to ascertain who they each were, while they passed up stairs, supposing they were following Lady Rosa. At length their voices sounded in his ear—he started—listened: yes—they certainly were speaking cheerfully!—he turned his eyes inquiringly, wildly on Lady Rosa—his feelings were wrought beyond consistency—her happiness and his own became confounded in his heart, and he

forgot at that moment that any one but Sir Charles Wilton had ever stood between him and her acceptance. She met the glance, and she understood it, in all its inconsistency, because her own heart had never acknowledged any other barrier. Her countenance was the index of that heart—she smiled faintly, but expressively—and, in the same instant, Rochford was on his knees before her—

“ You are free !” he murmured, smothering the sounds, and his own violent emotion, upon her hand ; but she had another still disengaged—she raised it slightly twice—and twice it dropped upon her lap. At last she suffered it to fall upon his shoulder, and whispered, “ No—for I am—”

But it was foreign to her character to finish her sentence as she intended ; and, instead of it, she snatched both hands away, and covered her burning face.

“ *Mine ! mine !*—you meant that you were *mine !*” he said ; and as he folded her, unresistingly, to his bosom, he whispered, “ I knew it was impossible that hearts like ours could for ever misunderstand each other !” * * * *

On the joy and congratulations which succeeded the announcement of the *éclaircissement* between Rochford and Lady Rosa it would be worse than idle to expatiate. Even Lord Lisbrian, though

trembling in his soul for the consequences to himself; could not refrain from joining in them. But his daughter did not long forget his anxiety, in her own happiness. "Come with me, papa!" she said; and, once more accompanying him to his dressing-room, with a beaming, playful smile, she shewed him the order, made out in her name, for five thousand pounds.

"The three weeks expire to-day, you know," she said, "so you must not lose a post in remitting this to Lord Still-Organ, with my respects. Remember, I do not give it to you, but to him; and never insult me again with my incapability as a minor! You see there are mines richer than those in the bowels of the earth, which do not wait for the magic number of twenty-one to bestow happiness, and the means of honesty!" And she then explained to him, more intelligibly, all that had passed between Mr. Clarendon and Rochford; and which, now that it had become available, Rochford could no longer conceal from her.

Lord Lisbrian's nerves, though less sensitive than those of many, were not altogether invulnerable; and, like those of others concerned in his affairs, had yielded a good deal to the attacks made upon them of late. He once again burst into tears. "My God! my God!" he said; "if there were more people in the world like these two men, how

much better the rest would be! Rosa, your father will be a different character henceforth!" And, when the father and daughter returned to the drawing-room, a superficial observer might have supposed, by the appearance of their eyes, that some fearful communication had passed between them—but there were no superficial observers to misunderstand them; and almost perfect happiness prevailed amongst the party for that day.

In the meantime, Sir Charles Wilton, hastening from the church to his hotel, found there awaiting him a letter from his sister Susan, being the first communication which had passed between them since he had first started from Lisbrian Castle. The contents were not such as tended to relieve him from the embarrassments already crowding round him. It contained a formal notice from Mr. Phelan, that he should forthwith take legal steps to recover the portion assigned to his wife by her father's will, unless Sir Charles should think it advisable to avoid the consequent *exposé*, by paying it at once without further trouble.

Sir Charles had not the means. So, considering that, and the very great clog that Miss Ellen O'Shaughnessy would prove in future to his matrimonial speculations, and certain other little rumours to those of a different description, he formed the plan of his future life upon the spot; and only de-

laying long enough to scrawl a hasty line to Lord Still-Organ, informing him that their scheme having failed, and he, consequently, unable to redeem his pledge, Lord Still-Organ was at liberty to proceed as he thought best,—and another to Mr. Phelan, empowering him to take what he could get, amongst the other creditors, on the sale of his northern estate, together with any dividend Lord Lisbrian might be able to pay,—he betook himself to the Continent, without having even asked to see the certificate of his marriage, much less said a parting word to his fair bride : and as he was there when last heard of, supporting himself at play, by running his remains of character against his love of expense, with admirable calculation and economy, we deem it best to make no further inquiries concerning him, but to bid him adieu for ever.

Very different, in the meantime, were the effects produced by his two letters upon those to whom they were directed. Mr. Phelan, whose own character was by no means one to court publicity, was perfectly satisfied to take his chance for all he knew Sir Charles had to give, and determined that the moment it could be put into any available form, he would, with his lady-wife, seek a settlement in Australia—a determination which in due time he put into practice.

But not so was Lord Still-Organ. Convinced

in his own mind, from the first, that Lord Lisbrian, in the desperate condition of his character and fortune, would compel his daughter to accept the hand of the supposed wealthy English baronet, whom he had himself brought over to represent the county in parliament, and confirmed in this conviction by Sir Charles's letter, he had hugged himself for the adroit management which had secured to him the repayment of his money ; and when his son set off for London, as he supposed, on receiving that information, he hugged himself once more, to think that he would certainly arrive too late—as he certainly should have been but for the circumstances of which Lord Still-Organ was ignorant.

The very same post which brought him Sir Charles' desperate farewell, brought him, also, a letter from Lord Lisbrian with his daughter's gift ; and one from his own son, informing him of his having renewed his proposals to Lady Rosa, and their having been accepted. But, it so happened that he opened Sir Charles's letter first,—and the effect it produced rendered him incapable of opening the others—he fell from the chair, in which he was sitting, with a crash that brought his family around him—and although no bodily injury was visible, he never from that moment suffered food to enter his lips, nor a word to escape from them, except a weak and apparently unconscious reiteration of “ con-

stable" and "warrant," until the arrival of Rochford, who, having been immediately sent for, lost not a moment in obeying the summons.

For some time his presence seemed to produce no change; but as he looked around him in search of any solution of this strange and unaccountable attack succeeding the receipt of letters that ought to have produced an effect so different, his eye accidentally caught his own and Lord Lisbrian's lying unopened amongst a heap of others that had since arrived. Instantly a thought, a hope occurred to him,—he tore open Lord Lisbrian's, and taking out the order for the five thousand pounds, held it before the eyes of the invalid, at the same time gently and perspicuously explaining to him what it was, and whence it came. For some moments even this seemed to fail, although it was evident he understood the purport of it by a faint colour which slowly chased the hue of death—and an expression in the eye telling that the spirit had been recalled.

Rochford took his hand, and ventured to congratulate him,—the invalid stared inquiringly upon him, and drew a deep sigh. Presently his eye wandered towards the table on which his letters lay,—Rochford explained to him how he had failed of opening this one. The patient sighed again; and

after one or two ineffectual efforts, pronounced the words, "I think I know!" From that moment he progressed,—his recovery was slow, but it was effectual,—and perhaps it was not possible that any circumstance could have been devised that would have gone so far towards reconciling him to the marriage of his son with the bankrupt's daughter as this money having come to him through her hands, far remote as was her intention from offering it with that view, or her suspicion of its being necessary. Still, it did not by any means go the length of inducing him to approve of the match; but knowing that all remonstrances against it would now be absolutely fruitless, and perhaps building some hope on hearing, that, not only the marriage was not to take place for six months, but that Lady Rosa had positively prohibited Rochford from visiting her during that time, he made, what he considered, the very great sacrifice of coldly intimating his consent, for which Rochford thanked him warmly.

All hopes of compelling Sir Charles Wilton to receive his wife being frustrated by his departure for the Continent, Tracey and the stout country Abigail once more became her escorts back to her own neighbourhood, where the circumstance of her having lived a week in Lord Lisbrian's house, with

Lady Rosa went further towards upholding her in the estimation of her acquaintances than all the certificates, or perhaps all the rank in the world, might have done without it ; for every retired neighbourhood has its own world, and believes it the best world on this side of time.

CHAPTER XV.

AND now, for the first time, we are about to avail ourselves of the privilege accorded to all novel-writers,—than which, perhaps, there could not be adduced an instance more clearly verifying the saying, that the giver is more blest than the receiver—and, supposing two months passed over since the events recorded in the last chapter, proceed to give such details, in as few words as possible, as may lead to a lucid understanding of the closing scenes.

Lord Lisbrian being, by the noble and manly benevolence of Mr. Clarendon, freed from the most fatal of all his involvements, and the prospects of his daughter being now the brightest that his heart could wish, his spirits soon began, once more, to recover their tone, and his temper its characteristic

heedlessness. His creditors still continued liberal and indulgent ; for although many became impatient at the undiminished luxury in which he continued to live, and thought it hard that while they were obliged to lay down carriages or horses, they could not be sure that he himself was not their purchaser—the greater number were those who, admitted to his intimacy, saw that he really entertained no fears himself; that he had given orders for the sale of his darling hobby, the Irish property; and the very excess of the confusion, evident to the meanest capacity, in which his affairs were involved, together with his now morbidly keen sense of honesty and honour, went as far as anything else, in the whole business, to excite the most sanguine hopes, that, when a settlement could be made, it would be satisfactory.

Indeed, so complete, and of such long-standing, was the confusion, that even the villanous head-clerk, Steen, came in for some benefit from it, it being shrewdly suspected that despair of bringing the affairs entrusted to him into order, rather than inborn dishonesty, had first suggested the idea of flight—although, when he was about to go, he thought he might as well profit by what assets could be made available, as leave them to an employer so utterly heedless as Lord Lisbrian ; and, in consideration of all this, and his disappointment

of a wife, that same heedless, but good-natured employer, contrived to have his sentence of death commuted into one of perpetual banishment, which added the last link to Lady Wilton's self-gratulation on her escape.

But, amongst the hundreds, and perhaps thousands, who listened with anxiety to the various reports respecting Lord Lisbrian's solvency, there was one, who, without having ever had a shilling in that or any other bank in her life, was not less interested in them than those who had thousands at stake,—this one was Lady St. Clair. Successful to the extent of carrying off Lord Halimore, by the united influence of coquetry and fear of infection, no sooner did the latter cease to act than the former lost its power; and, merely fulfilling his engagement of seeing her safe to town, he withdrew entirely and at once from her society; and, disgusted equally with her and with himself, turned all his gentlemanly feelings to repairing the error of which he felt he had been guilty.

Lady St. Clair's situation now became desperate; she had risked all upon this stroke, and she found herself at an expensive hotel in London, with an exhausted purse, and not a single link in the great chain of fashionable life, for which she had long abandoned all her humbler friends. It was with no ordinary feelings of anxiety, then, that she

listened to the reports of Lord Lisbrian's solvency, and of his living in his usual splendour in his house in Belgrave Square. "*On revient toujours a ses premier amours*" immediately flitted across her mind; and although she could not flatter herself with being his first love, to be his last might, in this case, she thought, be almost as good. Repeated failures, however, had made her cautious—and, instead of disgusting Lady Rosa by premature intrusion, or even reminding Lord Lisbrian himself of former foolishness, she assumed an air of dignity—and, instead of love, talked of pity for his misfortunes, and occasionally of her own difficulty in being pleased; after which she was so sure to mention Lord Halimore's name with a sigh and a smile, that, without her ever having attempted to say she had refused him, they became so intimately associated in Lord Lisbrian's mind, that he would have asserted the fact, had there been occasion, in any company in the world.

It is astonishing the effect this persuasion had upon him. We all have our vulnerable points, to which no armour will extend,—that of a fine man, ay, or woman either, in the twilight of life, will almost invariably be found to be on the subject of age. "She is a sensible woman, after all!" Lord Lisbrian said; "and, with all her little playfulness, looks on

boys as boys. I did her great injustice to fancy her at any one's beck !”

It was shortly after coming to this sage conclusion, that, one day, after considerable hesitation, he made known to his daughter that Lady St. Clair was still in town, and that, although delicacy for her feelings had hitherto prevented her from intruding upon their seclusion, she had never ceased to make the most affectionate inquiries, and to take the warmest interest in their concerns.

“Never ceased !—why, where have you been seeing her, papa ?” his daughter asked, with unsuspecting simplicity.

Lord Lisbrian coloured slightly as he answered, “Oh, why, I have met her frequently,—she is still at the —— Hotel, and I know would be delighted to renew her acquaintance with you, Rosa ; and, in fact, it seems to me unkind in you not to allow her, such friends as you were ! and now nearly three months passed over since your poor brother’s death, —there really is no excuse. You will oblige me by calling on her, Rosa.”

Lady Rosa smiled at the hallucination which made her father think that Lady St. Clair and she had been *such* friends ; but still, too happy in her own prospects, though very anxious for those of her father, to refuse whatever could contribute to the

happiness of others, she was preparing to set out next day, when her father stopped her to say, "You are going alone, Rosa?"

"No, papa; Lucy is coming with me. We are going to some shops afterwards."

"Oh, well, come back for her! I wish you particularly to go alone, and I know Lady St. Clair wishes it also."

Lady Rosa, although a little surprised, of course consented; but the little increased into great, when, arriving at the same expensive hotel in which she had first visited the lady, she found her, with her pretty head, lace cap, and all, buried in the self-same down cushions, from which she refused to lift it up, even at the sound of Lady Rosa's salutation.

Lady Rosa became alarmed. "Dear Lady St. Clair, are you ill?" she asked, and was softly moving to the bell, when she heard the words, "Has he not then told you?" come forth in smothered, but not unjoyous accents. Lady Rosa professed her want of comprehension, although her heart began to misgive her.

"Naughty man!" exclaimed the lady, looking up with as much seeming surprise as if she had not herself insisted on being the one to communicate to the daughter that the father had the evening before proposed for her, and—been ac-

cepted—in order that he might not witness the first burst of Lady Rosa's grief or indignation.

But Lady Rosa made no display of either. Shocked and grieved she was to see such an instance of wayward imprudence in her father; but she felt no right of indignation; and she really pitied the pretty creature standing before her, of whose own situation she was ignorant, and whom, she concluded, must be so of his. But none of this did she express. She had had more than one opportunity of perceiving that her father was not very easily dissuaded from anything which he had resolved to do; and, at all events, she felt that in the present case it would be too late. After a few speeches, then, of as much kindness as sincerity would permit her to offer, she withdrew, leaving Lady St. Clair the happiest of women, and lost in amazement at her placidity.

There was but one shadow had fallen upon the interview. Lady St. Clair, by way of deprecating her wrath, had said, "Of course, you know, it is not to take place for ages;" and Lady Rosa, in her simple sincerity, answered, "I suppose not."

Now, as the lady's purse was rapidly sinking lower and lower, so that it was only by a gentle intimation of her expectations, to the proprietor of the hotel, that she had been able to continue there so

long, it would have been much more consonant to her wishes if Lady Rosa had endeavoured to reason her out of her prudery ; but as Lady Rosa could not be prevailed on to name a shorter period than six months for Rochford's probation, it was scarcely to be expected that she would have thought of a shorter one for her father. Her thoughts and his were very different, however, upon many subjects.

In less than a week after Lady St. Clair had made her communication to Lady Rosa, and when she had again established herself as the intimate friend of the family, Lord Lisbrian one day called his daughter apart, and, with a face of solemn consideration, said—

“ Rosa, my love, do you know, I am beginning to be uneasy at the expense of this establishment that we are keeping up, and nothing effectual doing about Lisbrian. Hubert and Kelly keep croaking so much to me about the state of affairs, and that there never will be half money enough to pay the debts, that I am beginning to think seriously of retrenching.”

“ My dear papa, I am so happy to hear you say so!” she answered, earnestly ; “ you know how much I have wished it all along ! it does seem to me so inconsistent with all your debts.”

“ Pooh ! child ; you are talking of what you know nothing about. An alarm now to my creditors by

any change would ruin all. Appearances must be kept up."

"False appearances, papa?"

"Yes; even false appearances, sometimes; if you choose to call them so."

"But it seems to me, papa, that if that is a rule of trade, it cannot continue to deceive; and, I fear, it is only self-indulgence borrowing the cloak of prudence."

"Rosa, my dear, do you think that your going to be married is to make you a Solomon all at once?"

"No, papa," she answered, a little mischievously; "I have no reason to think that is the usual effect."

Her father laughed aloud, pinched her chin, and then in the highest good humour said, "Well, now, Rosa, that you have led to it yourself, that is precisely what I want to talk to you about! You see there would be a sort of indecency or disrespect in my breaking up my establishment before my marriage; it would be much pleasanter to my feelings, and of course to poor Lady St. Clair's, that it should seem to emanate from her."

His daughter asked if the lady was aware of the state of his affairs. As much as he was himself, he said; and that was as much as any one could expect; though, indeed, she was so disinterested that she did not care; and for that reason, also, the

sooner he could attend to his affairs the better ; and he felt he should be much better able to do so if this matter were off his mind. "In short, Rosa," he said, "I have been considering very seriously on the subject, and have come to the conclusion, that, as my poor boy is now three months gone, and every respect paid to his memory, it is absolutely a duty to my creditors, and—and to every body, that I should put myself in a situation seriously to attend to my business ; and I have but one request to make of you upon the subject, which is, that you will not let your little girlish scruples stand in the way of my gratification, but that you will shorten Rochford's probation—poor fellow—and consent to be married the same time that I am !"

To this, however, Lady Rosa uttered a positive refusal. She was really and unaffectedly sorry to disappoint her father, and she assured him so ; but without dwelling upon her own feelings in contradistinction to his, she reminded him of the shock both she and Rochford had received—and which both felt called upon to acknowledge—by the melancholy death of Miss Wilton. Lord Lisbrian did not affect to enter into her feelings upon the subject ; but as he had also once or twice imagined that she inherited a very slight proportion of his own determination, he gave up the point at once, and so cheerfully, that

it immediately occurred to her the suggestion had not originated with himself ; an idea which considerably lessened her regret for having refused to listen to it, and in which she was fully confirmed the next moment, by his kissing her affectionately, and saying, "I believe you are right, after all ; it would be rather a *scena*, the father and daughter on the same day ; but, you understand, we have determined to have it as quiet and private as can possibly be."

Once more Lady Rosa said, "I suppose so ;" but added, "it must depend a little on the lady, however."

"Oh ! she will be delighted, I know !" Lord Lisbrian said ; and as he hurried out of the room on saying so, his daughter had no time to ask with which part of the arrangement he promised for her delight. It seemed to apply to both, however ; for the next time he appeared he informed her that Lady St. Clair had, most amiably and condescendingly, put herself entirely into his and Lady Rosa's hands "and that being the case, you know, Rosa," he continued, "I am absolutely called upon to name as early a day as possible."

"But I may be supposed to have some neutralizing power," his daughter said, smiling.

"No, no ; nonsense ! She only named you out of—nay, I mean—Rosa—I may as well tell you a secret—Lady St. Clair has no great fortune ! I

don't pretend it—nor she either; so it is only, in fact, wasting my money the longer we live separate. So now, like a dear good girl, do not teaze poor père any further. I solemnly protest to you, Rosa, I should never have thought of this if you had not been so delightfully provided for yourself; but as you were about to leave me alone, what *could* I do?"

"What you are about to do, my dearest papa! And although, in our very first moments of happiness, both Mr. Rochford and myself felt how greatly it was enhanced by the prospect of comforting and supporting you in your trials, still if another can fill my place as well, believe me, I shall learn to love her dearly! And now, dear papa, all I ask is that you will let four months be completed before you celebrate your marriage."

Lord Lisbrian, catching her in his arms in a transport of affection, vowed that she should rule him in all things; and added—"You and Rochford must either spend a great deal of time with me, Rosa, or let me spend it with you; for I have promised him not to suffer certain impressions that he made, now and then, upon me, at his own cunning times, to be utterly effaced. And I assure you, through all, I have not forgotten my promise, though I deferred the performance of it till I should

be a little settled; but I know I should in time, if he was not sometimes present to remind me; and I think, somehow, he may be of use to poor Lady St. Clair also! But I fear it must be here, after all," he continued, with a sigh; "for I do not think I could ever bear to go to that neighbourhood again, and the poor, dear, old castle sold."

"Sold?" repeated his daughter, starting. "Is it really, then, gone?"

"I may say it is!" he answered; "for, as they say that the direful misery of Tracey's countenance, when any one came to inquire about it, has absolutely driven away more than one good-natured purchaser, they have persuaded me to take the matter out of his hands entirely—and now there is no doubt it will be sold without delay."

"So much the better, I know, since it is to be," said Lady Rosa. "And yet—" and she burst into tears.

"God bless you! my child, for those tears," said her father. "I like you better for them than for everything else that you have said and done yet! but as you say it must be, so let us say no more about it; and I'll go and tell Lady St. Clair what you have settled. Heigh ho!" and he went away. And the day after the fourth month from the death of his son was completed, the marriage took place—

as privately as he promised—and the bride and bridegroom betook themselves to Brighton to spend a week, Lord Lisbrian pledging himself to his son and daughter, that, for the sake of appearance, he would not be longer absent; but, for once, he was even better than his word.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT is a common observation, that the house from which a new-married couple have just taken their departure generally becomes a prey to lassitude and low-spirits for the remainder of that day, at least. Some attribute this effect to reaction after unusual excitement; some to anxiety for those just launched into life; and some to less disinterested causes. For my own part, however, if it is true at all, I think it must be owing to "the happy pair" having carried away, between themselves, so much more than their fair proportion of the average sum of happiness allotted to each dwelling, that the remaining inhabitants must suffer until, directed by even-handed justice, matters again find their level. However this may be, it was with sad and foreboding hearts that Hubert, now Lord L'Estrange, and his

sister saw their father and his bride drive from the door.

“And yet I do not know why we should view it in so gloomy a point,” Lady Rosa presently said. “I really think my father will be happier for her society ; and for her—she must have known what she was about, and deemed it her most prudent course.”

“I doubt it. I doubt it very much, Rosa,” her brother said. “Kelly and myself have utterly failed in our endeavours to make my father see how utterly he is ruined. And although, while the confusion of his affairs was too dense for any one to penetrate, the creditors were willing to hope the best—as every day is rendering them more and more clear, it is quite impossible but that the crash must come, and that speedily. Were it not for your prospects, my beloved sister, I should be in despair !”

“While I scarcely think but of yours!” she said, looking frightened and dejected.

“Nay, do not think of me ! An educated man, with youth and health, can always carve his way, although, strange to say, I find, that, if I have any talents they are those inherited from my grandfather for commerce ; and if I could choose my line of life, it would be to be a banker, with Kelly for my head-clerk, and—*not* my father for a partner !

This, however, in the present state of affairs is mere chimera, and therefore I only wait to see these same affairs wound up—to complete my minority—which will now, you know, be in a few weeks, and then, making some trifling settlement on my poor father, out of my portion as a younger child, accept some of the offers of employment that have been already most kindly made to me by many of my college friends—Halimore amongst the rest. But don't you think we ought now to go to Lucy? What a sweet child she is! and how rapidly improving in manner and accent! She will be quite a little gentlewoman if you keep her much longer."

It was the third evening after this conversation between the brother and sister, that, as they and their youthful companion, Lucy Kelly, sat round a blazing fire, each making exertions to evince the cheerfulness that one, at least, only felt, when their attention was arrested by the sudden stopping of a carriage at the door, and the loud and hasty knock that succeeded.

"Who can it be?" was the question asked by all, but answered by none; and, before there was time to resort from the probable to the impossible in their guesses, their curiosity on that point was satisfied by Lord and Lady Lisbrian walking into the room—the gentleman, at least, evidently in a state of the utmost excitement. Hubert's first

impression naturally was, that the dreaded crisis was arrived, however unaccountably, without his knowledge, and that Lord Lisbrian was come to meet his fate like a man. A second glance, however, shewed him that, to whatever cause the excitement was owing, it, evidently, was of a pleasurable kind. But before questions or explanations could be asked or heard, Lord Lisbrian rushed over to his daughter, and catching her in his arms, nearly threw her up into the air with boyish extravagance of delight, as he exclaimed, "No more half consents, now, on the part of my Lord Still-Organ, my girl! Hold up your head, once more, with the best nobleman's daughter who can write her fortune twenty thousand pounds! And you, my poor dear Hubert!" he cried, turning, and wringing his hand,—“you that I have been ashamed to look at,—cast aside your anxiety and lecturing! all will be well now—that is, he added, with sudden anxiety, “if the poor old castle is not gone? Don't tell me to-night if it is, Hubert! and, if it is not—send off an express this moment to Ireland, to forbid their proceeding with the sale on any account whatever; for, d—me!—and I mean that for a registered oath—if I keep this cursed bank a moment longer than to get my affairs settled, turn Rosa's fortune, and then—hey for old Ireland, where I shall feel and live a prince!”

During this unintelligible exordium, no one had been disengaged enough to think of the fair Countess; but now, as Lord Lisbrian was obliged to take time to breathe, Lady Rosa went towards her, and could not help observing that neither her countenance or manner exhibited the same exhilaration as those of her husband.

“ You are fatigued,” Lady Rosa said; “ let me order some refreshment, and perhaps, by that time, papa will condescend to explain what it is in which he expects us to rejoice with him.” However, as Lord Lisbrian’s disjointed sentences and exclamations, and the questions and explanations they entailed, occupied a great deal more time than was necessary, we shall take upon ourselves the task of enlightening our readers.

A younger brother of the late Viscount St. Clair had gone, in early life, to India, when that country was a sort of extensive gambling establishment, staking gold against *human life*. Mr. St. Clair won—but in winning money, learned to love it; and he lingered on, hoarding thousand after thousand, and never finding in his heart to dispose of them, even in idea, by making a will. The consequence was that when, at last, he was, a short time before his brother Lord St. Clair’s marriage, suddenly called away from that which he would not send from him, the sole heir to his immense wealth

was found, after considerable delay, and total unconsciousness on her part, to be that brother's residuary legatee—the fair bridal widow !

How Lady Lisbrian felt when this news was formally announced to her by letters from the East India agents, on the fourth morning after her hurried marriage with the bankrupt-banker, can never be exactly ascertained ; but as she was an excellent actress, and a prudent woman in most cases—and, moreover, as her husband arrived in Belgrave Square in such joyous mood the evening of the same day—it may be reasonably inferred that she made no display of regret calculated to displease or wound his feelings ; and if his expressed determination to give up London, and all its attractions, to bury himself and her in an old castle, in a remote part of Ireland, did call a shade of discontent to her brow, and of paleness to her cheek, when Lady Rosa attributed it to fatigue, she was satisfied to avail herself of the excuse ; and as there was not any malignant spirit present, determined “ to know the worst,” what others took for granted, she, too, soon began to believe must be the case ; and in the congratulations that poured in on every side from without, and the happiness that prevailed within, she was able to continue to play the part of the amiable benefactress so as to gain the applause and admiration of all parties.

The first use that was made of the newly acquired wealth was of course to satisfy Lord Lisbrian's creditors—and so fully adequate was it found, that not only was the Irish property rescued from sale, and Lady Rosa's fortune at once secured, but the wish which, in a moment of utter despondency, Hubert had expressed was gratified to the letter—and it was presently announced that the bank was once more to open under the auspicious name of Hubert L'Estrange, with Kelly,—whose zeal, talents, and uprightness had been duly appreciated throughout,—as his head-clerk; while his father was to withdraw entirely, and at once, from the concern, to that sphere which he was much better calculated to fill,—namely, that of an Irish country gentleman.

“And now,” he said, when these arrangements were agreed upon, “I have but one wish remaining, and that is, that your marriage, Rosa, should be celebrated with pomp and publicity at Lisbrian Castle! Do not refuse me this, my darling; and I will put myself into yours and Rochford's hands, from that moment, for wiser and better purposes.” Who could refuse such a bribe, and so offered, from a father? Lady Rosa threw herself into his arms, and between smiles, tears, and blushes, gave an immediate consent; and as the term of Rochford's probation was now near its close, and Lord

Still-Organ had lately written a most flattering intimation, to Lady Rosa, of his happiness in receiving her as a daughter, it was determined that the departure for Ireland should take place without delay.

But Lady Rosa had yet two wishes of her own to have gratified—without which she felt her happiness would be incomplete. One was, that he who had become their most valuable friend in adversity should witness, and cheer, with his enlivening presence, the prosperity which he had been so instrumental in securing—and for this purpose she wrote herself to Mr. Clarendon, informing him of the day on which they should pass through Dublin, and earnestly beseeching him to accompany them from thence to Lisbrian Castle, where her nuptials were to be celebrated the following morning—in order to allow her the pleasure of restoring, with her own hand, the gift—for such, in fact, it was—which she had so freely accepted from him. The other was, that Tracey, the simple, devoted follower, who was in himself an exemplification of how far goodness will supply the place of cleverness, should, on the same day as herself, be made happy by a union with the elder Miss Kelly, in whose sterling worth and strong understanding she saw the very companion suited to him, and between whom and himself the most affectionate attachment had long existed, though hitherto refused indulgence through

her superior prudence, upheld by her father's principles—while Tracey was comforted by her mother's sympathy.

It was to her father that Lady Rosa appealed for the accomplishment of this second wish—but little did she anticipate his reception of it. The consciousness which Tracey had one day exhibited at luncheon at Lisbrian Castle, on the subject of the female part of Mrs. Kelly's family, had long passed from Lord Lisbrian's mind—and when his daughter, stealing into his dressing-room the morning after she had given her consent to his last request, proceeded to make hers, and to speak seriously of an attachment between Tracey and Miss Kelly, it is impossible to do justice to the shout of exquisite delight and boyish mirth that greeted her intelligence.

“Tracey in love!” he reiterated over and over again; “Tracey? did you seriously say *Tracey* was in love? Oh! talk of *oysters* after that!” and again he shouted so loud that his daughter besought him not to collect the house about them.

“To be sure! to be sure! I will do anything upon earth you like to forward so exquisite a business!” he said. “What capital fun! But I say, Rosa, we must really contrive to manage it so as to make as much of it as possible!”

“How do you mean, papa?” she asked, begin-

ning to have some misgivings, “ Now, dear papa, remember you promised yesterday, if I granted your request, to put yourself into Mr. Rochford’s and my hands for the future.”

“ Not—not in earthly things!—not in earthly things, my fair lady!” he rapturously exclaimed ; “ and so, my own way I will have this once, if I never were to have it again! Go away now, and let me finish my dressing, and I’ll tell you when I have settled my plan.” Lady Rosa heard no more upon the subject that day, and was absolutely afraid to ask ; but she was surprised by her father returning her visit in her room, next morning, at a much earlier hour than was usual with him.

“ Rosa!” he exclaimed, I have scarcely been able to sleep all night for thinking of the delightful prospects you have opened to me about Tracey! Oh, do only think how it will serve to enliven us all, for years to come, if we *should* ever feel dull, at Lisbrian Castle! I have settled everything admirably in my own mind now—and I will begin by telling you, that, if you will help me through with it, I shall make Tracey perfectly comfortable in a pecuniary way—indeed, he deserves it at our hands—and give you, this moment, five hundred pounds for Miss Kelly’s cadeau!” Lady Rosa, losing sight for the moment of any little vague misgivings, in this substantial benefit to those for whom she was so

sincerely interested, joyously and gratefully bound herself to accept her father's conditions, and offered him a kiss; he returned the caress affectionately, but said, "Nay, don't give payment, child, till you examine the purchase! My plan is this—and I solemnly declare before-hand, that if you thwart me in it, I will not only leave you to provide for them yourself as you can, but will take it seriously ill of either you or Rochford to interfere with my agent against my will—so, premising this, I will tell you it is that, as you have promised Rochford to marry him the day after we arrive at Lisbrian Castle, Tracey is not to hear one single word, nor get the most remote hint of our intentions in his favour, —but that everything shall be prepared for his marriage being celebrated the same day as yours, and that he is not told a word of it until that morning—and then, that I am, myself, to be the one to tell him—Now, remember that part of it particularly! Do you think you can engage to manage this with your friends, and venture to pledge me your honour to the conditions being strictly observed?"

"My dear papa!" his daughter again exclaimed, now as much astonished as she was before delighted; "of course, you are jesting! You would not clog so much liberality with such—I had nearly said—absurd but—capricious conditions?"

"If you think so, then, manage it your own

way!" he said; and was leaving the room with an air of determined indifference, which Lady Rosa had learnt to know would prove fatal to her cause.

"Nay, papa, let us discuss it," she said. "I am sure, Sir, I could manage it—especially having Lucy here with me—and that anything Mrs. Kelly or any of her family promise they will strictly adhere to—at the same time, I think it will be treating them not respectfully."

"Well, you know, if they think so, they have their alternative. I think it a little hard that, if I pay so dearly for it, I may not have a little fun!"

"Dearest papa! allow me to think you have a better motive for what you offer?"

"I *have* a better motive! but I see no reason on earth why I may not have a little pleasure for my good motives! I'm not setting it down as charity, nor anything of that sort—that Rochford can preach about a reward hereafter. I'm just doing it out of kindness to Tracey, and to please you and Rochford, and every one, and I do think it very hard if I am to be the only one to gain nothing by it!"

To this reasoning what could any one reply? so Lady Rosa changed her course, and said, "But it is being cruel to poor Tracey, instead of kind!"

"How so, pray?"

"Why, by depriving him of the pleasure of an-

icipation, and of making any little preparations he might wish for."

"And pray, what pleasurable anticipation has he now that I am depriving him of? Your doctrine merely comes to this—that I must give all or none; so, as that seems to me a little unreasonable, I will leave you to finish your dressing as fast as you can, and beg you will never name the subject to me again."

And, a second time, he was leaving the room, when his daughter once more stopped him by laying her hand upon his arm, and saying, "Well, hear me, papa! Suffer me to consult with Lucy—to take opinions, in short—and if any one else thinks it practicable, I am sure I shall not be more fastidious."

"But how soon shall I know your decision? for to me, half the battle is thinking it over beforehand. By heavens! it would be the best thing I ever did in my life!" and the vivid anticipation brought back his good humour in a hearty fit of laughing.

His daughter promised that his suspense should be ended before that day closed, in order, that, if possible, his dreams might again be on the happy subject! And she kept her word—and his dreams were happy—as far, at least, as they depended upon that—for Lucy, with the gay thoughtlessness and

mirth natural to her age and character, saw nothing but amusement and pleasure in the projected surprise; and whatever drawbacks any of the other members of the family perceived, they thought them more than counterbalanced by the conditional advantages; and, after all, perhaps Lady Rosa herself was the only one who did not think the sight of Tracey's first reception of the news would be worth some sacrifice.

It was at last arranged that Rochford was to be requested by Lady Rosa—who knew how much he was interested on the same subject, and to whom she now regretted that she had not, in the first instance, applied—to undertake the task of communicating the matter to Mr. and Mrs. Kelly and their daughter, in the best manner the case admitted of; which task Lady Rosa rendered as little difficult as she could, by the kindest, most respectful, and apologetic letters from herself, and by joyous, laughing ones from the happy Lucy. And, after all, perhaps, had Tracey rendered less essential services to the family the jest might have appeared much more offensive. As it was, the Kellys—kind and amiable themselves—could not believe that less than kindness was intended—and, for the rest—they made allowance for the caprice with which the English nobleman chose to clog his substantial generosity.—Mr. Kelly's cool northern blood, indeed,

might have, perhaps, disposed him to view the matter less favourably ; but his excellent sense, never-slumbering prudence, and, above all, the good-humoured blandishments of his laughing wife, soon brought him round, and a grateful answer was despatched to London, and the extraordinary secret as faithfully preserved amongst those to whom it was confided as ever was that of the Great Unknown.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was one of the loveliest months of April that heaven had ever lent to earth, when, once more, the road between Lisbrian Castle and the next town, on the Dublin side, was intercepted by a dense mob of peasantry of all sexes and all ages. Eagerly had they waited, for many hours, with an undying excitement,—which only Irish temperaments could have supplied so long,—when, just as the sun was shooting forth his last, bright, farewell rays before withdrawing for the night, they were seen to glance and flash upon the windows of three carriages, successively, as they rapidly approached.

“Don’t you think but we might begin, boys?” asked one impatient spirit.

“Take care what you’re about, Shamus! Remember the last time!” answered our friend Tracey.

“ Oh, but sure, Sir, there’s no sthrangers in it now, thanks be to God ! but all that knows our ways,—here goes, boys ! ” And Tracey, who thought it as well to suffer the first explosion to escape while the carriages were yet distant, making no further opposition, such a shout was sent forth as must have rent the clouds themselves, had there been a cloud upon that lovely day ! As it subsided, the first carriage drove up, and Lord Lisbrian himself put his head out of one window, renewing it with his own hearty voice—while, at the other—bowing and smiling, and kissing her pretty, ungloved hand, sat his new and lovely Countess. They passed on, and the next carriage drove up.

“ Ay, here’s our own dear beautiful darlint ! Long life—och, then, amen—long life, and long life to her again and again ! ” sobbed rather than shouted the crowd, as Lady Rosa was discovered, whose residence amongst them, short as it had been, had taught her all she wanted to know—how to do good—and enshrined her in the warmest corner of their warm hearts. Lucy Kelly was by her side—but neither could take their handkerchiefs from their eyes.

“ Ay ! look at her cryin’, the darlint ! just as she did the day she left us ! ” they exclaimed in the greatest delight and exultation, though wiping their own eyes at the same time, men as well as

women—"Och, then, that every bright tear she ever dhropped amongst us may be a smile as bright before her from this out, I pray God! and sure it will! When she cried when we cried, why wouldn't she laugh when we laugh?" And, as, that moment, she ventured to remove her handkerchief, for a moment, to return their greetings, the radiant, beautiful smile that, almost unknown to herself, seemed to herald success to the prayer, was hailed with a shout, which, if less deafening than the first, gained more than it lost in the heartfelt yet respectful admiration it announced.

"Long life to you, Miss Lucy! and to your father and mother's daughter!" they added, and the carriage was suffered to pass on. The third succeeded, but there was a dead pause for a moment—Hubert was indeed discovered in it; but as there was another, and one whose imposing appearance inspired respect and consideration, native politeness kept them silent, until, as the carriage was very slowly endeavouring to make its way through the half-yielding, half-opposing tide, the whisper came floating on its wave that "the stranger was the gentleman who went bail for my Lord!"—And, if clouds could not have stood the shout before, no arch but heaven's own—that smiles on the homage to virtue, however paid,—could have stood that which now rent the atmosphere! It

seemed as if every separate feeling they had each experienced were combined in that;—and it is asserted that the first patient who took advantage of Mr. Clarendon's visit was an old man who told him he had “lost his hearin’ by hoshin’ for his honour!”

In the meantime, Clarendon himself was not a little astounded, if not abashed, by his reception; alternately bowing, and turning to Hubert, he exclaimed, “What in the world do they mean? or how have they got any idea of that transaction?” Hubert declared, and with truth, that he did not know. “It is really too ridiculous and distressing!” Clarendon went on, bowing all the time to the still shouting multitude—“’pon my soul, it is too bad! I little thought, when I could not deny myself the gratification of seeing the people receive you all, once more, that I was to come in for any share of it myself! What a coxcomb I must appear to them this moment, as if I had come for the purpose!”

“The business of to-morrow will put that out of their heads,” said Hubert, demurely.

“But, good God! you do not mean they really do think it?” Clarendon exclaimed, now colouring up to the eyes, and throwing himself back into the carriage, out of their sight.

His young companion burst out laughing. “For-

give me, my dear Sir !” he said ; “ but you really do sometimes make me forget you are not still an ardent boy. I merely said so to produce this very effect ! but I can seriously assure you that these poor people are too little accustomed to happiness and kindness to fritter it away, when it presents itself, by refining on its origin ; they neither know nor ask why you have come ; that you are here is enough for them ; and now I must do my part, as I hear my own name at last.” And leaning out his handsome, smiling head, he returned the affectionate greetings he received.

Arrived at the castle, their reception was somewhat different from the last. “ Peggy of the castle,” now Peggy of the lodge, had the magnificent gate flung as far back as its hinges would admit, and, “ as it was not her look,” as she said herself, “ to join the crowd,” she stood holding the gate as if afraid it would otherwise close of itself in their faces, but really as an excuse for dropping such a succession of curtseys that Mr. Clarendon, who had spied her before his turn to pass through, observed that she must have a steam engine in her knees. As his carriage advanced she caught his eye—and colouring up, with surprise and delight, she popped up and down with increased energy—

“ How d’ye do ? how d’ye do ?” he said, good-naturedly, supposing her one of the unknown thou-

sands who claimed the acquaintanceship of gratitude with him.

“Do you know that woman?” asked Hubert, smiling.

“Why—no—not exactly,” he answered, looking out after her, and thereby inducing first a fresh accession of curtseys, and at last a demure disappearance into the lodge. “But she seems to know me, poor creature!”

“Yes; and you doubtless flatter yourself it is the tie of gratitude? I know you do, by the patronizing ‘how d’ye do;’ but what will you say when I tell you that her ‘nods and becks, and wreathed smiles’ are all claiming gratitude from you?”

“Indeed!” he exclaimed; “I am sorry to require being reminded on such a subject.”

“Oh, you stand acquitted so far, as you are ignorant, as yet, that she assumes to herself the merit of having introduced you to us—which, you know, is, of course, to her the *summum bonum* of earthly bliss—Oh! but here we are at last!” and as he spoke the carriage stopped at the door.

Unlike the time before, English servants had now been sent over to prepare everything for their reception, on a scale of magnificence even surpassing that of which they had then had such short-lived enjoyment—and, instead of being discovered listening at the door, Tracey now, in all the heartfelt en-

joyment and humble consciousness of having not marred that which was thrust upon him by others, stood smiling on the steps of the hall-door, as if inclined to lift each person that arrived, out of the carriage in his hands! Mr. Clarendon, indeed, he only knew by character, and therefore, though nearly worshipping him in his heart as the guardian angel of the family, he bowed as awkwardly to him as ever, and only suffered him to touch the tips of the fingers of his apparently reluctant hand; while, as an amende to his own feelings, he caught Hubert in his arms, for one moment, and then—unable longer to suppress the emotion that had been choking him ever since the first of them had entered under the roof once more,—he burst into a sudden, loud, and heartfelt howl, fled out of the door, past the postilions and servants, as if he had gone suddenly mad,—and, hiding himself in the shrubbery, dropped on his knees, and thumping his breast to relieve the excitement of his nerves, he raised his streaming eyes to heaven in a paroxysm of pious thankfulness, which they who could have mocked had never known what the feelings of true devotion are!

Mr. Clarendon and Hubert, in the meantime, proceeded to the drawing-room—where the first who received them, in silent but smiling happiness, was Rochford, the friend of all! The next

was Mrs. Kelly—and as, in her genuine delight, she had kissed each as she received them, and now extended the same benevolence to Hubert, Mr. Clarendon declared he would not be left out—she was unaffectedly abashed for a moment, and even blushed—for, by some genealogy of the heart, she had learned to consider all of the Lisbrian blood as “belonging to herself.” Clarendon, however, was not to be repulsed—and when she did yield, it was so heartily that she added, “Whethen, there! and it was never my heart that refused it to you! for where would we all be to-day but for your four bones?”

There was one other person now descried, in deep conversation with Lucy Kelly, in one of the windows—it was her eldest sister; who, when the first burst of greetings were over, came modestly forward to receive and pay her share; every one saluted her with respectful and affectionate cordiality,—and Clarendon, who had been let into the secret, and who, though exquisitely alive to the humorous, was still more so to the embarrassing situation of the modest and sensible-looking girl before him, took her hand also, and, in one slight pressure, conveyed to her all she could have wished to be assured of—namely, that she was surrounded by respectful and sympathizing friends—and perhaps, if such an analysis could really and impartially

be made, it is not often that the same number of equally happy hearts have gathered round the same board as that evening took their places at the dinner-table of Lisbrian Castle !

There was one amongst them, however, whose happiness,—although as disinterested as, perhaps, ever beat in human breast,—was destined to be of comparatively short duration. Consistent to the last in the selfishness that from the first mingled with Lord Lisbrian's better feelings on the subject of Tracey's marriage, he persisted in not giving him the slightest hint of the good fortune that was in store for him during the whole evening ; but, on the contrary, seemed to take the most wanton, schoolboy-like delight in the poor little man's smothered sighs of resignation when any allusion was made to the happiness awaiting Rochford ; and though Mrs. Kelly could not, on these occasions, restrain a smile, nor her daughter a conscious look, Tracey saw neither one nor the other, and was soon cheerful again in the cheerfulness of others.

At last, when, one by one, the party had retired for the night, and Tracey only lingered with his Lord through respect, and in order to learn if he had any further commands for him, to be executed early next morning, Lord Lisbrian suddenly said, " Yes, I have ! and some you little think of ! "

Nothing less than another trip to Scotland presented itself to poor Tracey's mind ; but he only looked his alarm.

"Come now, Tracey," Lord Lisbrian resumed ; "confess the truth—don't you envy Rochford very much ?"

Tracey stared, and faltered out some attempt at a compliment to Lady Rosa, but, at the same time, disclaiming all feeling of envy.

"Tut, you fool !" Lord Lisbrian exclaimed ; "I don't mean that,—but don't you envy any one that's going to be married ? And now, Tracey, I'm going to tell you a secret,—why they all kept it from you so long, I don't know,—but I'm going to break bounds and tell you, for I think you will be glad to hear it,—my daughter is not to be the only bride to-morrow ?"

"No, my Lord ?" he repeated, in great astonishment: "and who in the world is the other to be?"

"Guess."

"Oh, my word, I couldn't, my Lord ! Let me see—no—for the life of me, I don't know."

"What do you think of Miss Kelly, then?"

"Oh, joking you are, my Lord !" he said, in some astonishment, but not with the emotion Lord Lisbrian expected. "Sure, she's too young entirely, my Lord !"

“Too young!” Lord Lisbrian repeated, in a burst of laughing. “Why, I mean the old one! I mean Miss Kelly, the eldest; not our little Lucy—I give you my honour she is to be married to-morrow, immediately after my daughter, to a friend of mine!”

“No, my Lord, she is not.” Tracey answered, with the utmost coolness.

“No, Sir? what do you mean by contradicting me in that manner?” Lord Lisbrian said, with hasty passion. “Did I not give you my honour to the fact?—and I now repeat it!”

Tracey looked up at him in sudden terror, and became as pale as death;—not shewing any inclination to speak, however, more than his wildly anxious countenance expressed, Lord Lisbrian went on—“I trust to your keeping this secret till they tell you themselves;—but I thought, as you like the family, it was cruel keeping it from you.”

“And who is the man, my Lord?”

“Oh! that I really am *not* to tell you yet, because of some family reasons—and, though I know you are to be relied on, I cannot break trust entirely; but he’s a very worthy fellow, and will be here in the morning.”

“And this is thrue, my Lord?”

“Why, as true as my oath can make it, that’s all!”

“And that’s what she’s here for, after all?”

“That’s the very matter. Lady Rosa wished to pay her every respect.”

“And Lady Rosa, too ! that I thought—but no matter ! and Mr. Rochford, that I once thought—but I’m a fool !” And he clasped his hands and leant back in his chair, still deadly pale. For a moment, Lord Lisbrian’s good nature was on the point of overcoming his love of fun, but, unfortunately, a new idea—a new species of the torture he called fun—just then occurred to him, which he declared, had he thought of sooner, he would have spared Tracey the rest for that night—but as it was, he could not bring himself to relinquish it, although it was not to be put in force till the next morning.

“I think we had better retire now, Tracey,” he said ; “we must all be up early to-morrow.”

Tracey uttered not a word in reply, but rose mechanically, and lighting Lord Lisbrian’s candle, handed it to him.

“Aren’t you going to bed yourself, Tracey ?” Lord Lisbrian asked.

“Oh, I am, my Lord, I am !” he answered ; “but not just this minute ; I’ll just wait a little here, if you please.”

“Take care you’re not about to betray what I have told you to any living soul !” Lord Lisbrian said, sternly.

“ Oh ! not a word ; not a word, my Lord ! Who would I betray it to ? ”

“ Well, good night, then ; and look forward to the happiness of to-morrow.”

“ Good night, my Lord ; and indeed I don’t b’lieve it would be possible for me to be downright unhappy if I was even dyin’, with you all happy round me ! ”

Lord Lisbrian hurried out of the room, and clapped the door behind him, as if to drown this untimely expression of devoted and disinterested affection—and he was obliged, more than once, on his way up stairs, to remind himself that the greater the pressure on poor Tracey’s spirits now, the stronger would be the re-action to-morrow ; as if suddenness was strength, or strength happiness ! By the time he gained his apartment, however, he had argued himself into such perfect self-complacency as afforded him sound and peaceful slumbers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE morning destined for the nuptials of Mr. Rochford and Lady Rosa L'Estrange dawned as brightly as the veriest slave to prognostics could desire—and if the party who sat down to dinner at Lisbrian Castle the day before might be counted perfectly happy, the repose and refreshment of the night did not render them less so—for there was nothing in the causes conducing to it to shrink from on reflection. Lord Still-Organ, whose health seemed linked in some mysterious sympathy with Lord Lisbrian's prosperity, arrived to breakfast, with as many of his family as were residing with him; and on seeing Lady Rosa for the first time,—as he folded her in a fatherly embrace,—he was obliged to apologize for the exclamation of admiration which unaffectedly escaped him, and for which Rochford involuntarily caught and pressed his hand.

Mr. Kelly also came, looking grave but happy, and found considerable difficulty in preserving his dignity, by avoiding the expressive glances of his delighted wife, which, intended to be furtive, caught every eye but his. Mr. M'Carthy, the priest, who was early initiated into the secret of the double marriages, also made his appearance, at the earnest request of Rochford.

"He is not polished, I grant," Rochford said to Lord Lisbrian, in telling him that he had with some difficulty prevailed on him to join them at breakfast. "But it is rather unjust to except against the Catholic priesthood, in this country, for not being gentlemen, while we deny to them the means of becoming so by excluding them from our society."

"But it is their principles—" Lord Lisbrian began.

Rochford smiled. "Would you exclude the Turkish ambassador from your table," he asked, "if he would sit at it? Would you exclude Voltaire, if he were alive? Oh, my Lord, let us try to preserve some degree of consistency! I have seen Catholic priests whom educated Catholics themselves could only tolerate at their tables, occasionally, as a painful duty. But why is this so frequent? Because polished gentlemen are unwilling to enter a profession which, with other sacrifices, will par-

tially, at least, exclude them from the society of gentlemen."

"At all events, Rochford, I shall always be happy to receive any one on your recommendation."

"Thank you for that, for the present; and sometime hence, I think you will thank me when you find Mr. M'Carthy gradually improve in our society,—and from becoming convinced that Protestants can be his friends, will ask himself why he should be their enemy. But the ladies are going to breakfast—"

The sun shone out so splendidly on that happy morning, that, early as the season was, the windows were thrown open—as the party gathered, in bridal array, round the breakfast-table—as well to suffer the fumes of the smoking urns to escape, as to admit the delicious fragrance that rushed in to take its place. The feast for the tenantry was not to take place till three o'clock,—at which time it was calculated the party would have returned from church, and Tracey's happiness also be secured,—even with due allowance for the effects of his surprise—but as the sight of the company, and the happiness going forward was far more to that mercurial and laughter-loving people than mere substantial cheer, they were already clustering like bees in various groups about the lawn and shrubberies; and although in general conducting themselves with propriety and

respect, more than one blooming young face was seen to snatch a hasty peep through the open window, which, however, was generally succeeded by the apologetic offering of a bunch of such flowers as the season afforded, flung in as near to the lap of the acknowledged bride as might be, but not seldom lighting in the cups of some others of the party.

With the good feeling that almost always attends any grouping of the Irish peasantry for happiness, many of these offerings came verbally labelled, "for the new lady, and long life to her!" or, "for her honour's ladyship, Countess Lisbrian!" which, as soon as that lady understood to be aimed at her, she declined having any more breakfast, in order, if possible, to preserve her exquisite Parisian dress from sharing in the demonstrations of their goodwill. Upon the whole, she sustained her part extremely well and becomingly, however,—and, before bidding her a last farewell, we may be permitted to say that the same versatility of talent, joined to consummate prudence, and unfailing command of temper, enabled her to play her new part, as Lady of the manor, with the success that had crowned her early exertions on a very different stage—And if Lady Rosa continued to be more deeply loved, more intrinsically respected, Lady Lisbrian never became conscious that it was so;—and the verdict pronounced upon her character by her people pretty

nearly expressed her own sentiments, though in different words, respecting her situation in life—
“We might, maybe, have got better—but, by my sowl, we might have got far worse !”

Nor were her husband’s hopes of Rochford’s “being of use” to her, unfounded ; at least, if she did not ardently respond to, she faithfully seconded the efforts which Lord Lisbrian—under his affectionate and intelligent guidance, and that of his second-self, which Lady Rosa at once became,—made, for the enlightenment of the people’s minds and the amelioration of their condition—under which blessed influence, and the extensive and eternal interests therefrom springing, Lord Lisbrian’s own mind and feelings expanded, while his principles became steadied, until at last he one day laughingly—for he still laughed on—compelled Rochford to acknowledge, that, as far as man might presume to judge of man, he had redeemed his pledge to him, and had not suffered the good seed to perish.

But all this is anticipating ; and as he had himself declared to his daughter that he was to be allowed this last escapade against poor Tracey, we return to the point from which we diverged.

In the midst of the general joy of the wedding morning one person was missing, and more than once inquired for in vain—it was Tracey ; and when, at last, on sending to his room, it was ascertained

that he had not occupied it the night before, Lord Lisbrian looked as a murderer might be supposed to look on being suddenly detected ;—he actually changed colour more than once—and could himself, perhaps, scarcely have told what species of feeling was predominant in his mind at the moment, beyond a vague, undefined sense of alarm. Nor was he the only one at table who changed colour, while every one felt that some blunder had been committed. Suddenly a thought occurred to Lord Lisbrian—“Has any one been in the drawing-room to-day?” he hastily asked. No one had.

“I bet a pound he’s there still!” he exclaimed ; and without waiting to account for this very strange conjecture, he flew up stairs himself. Almost immediately, however, he returned—and, scarcely taking time to say that his search had been fruitless, he ordered a man and horse to go off instantly to Mr. Tracey’s house to inform him that the party waited for his arrival—nor, during the man’s absence, would he give the least explanation of what it was evident he knew more of than any others of the party. When he thought the man had time to return, he went out himself to meet him ; and, on receiving for answer that Mr. Tracey was not well, and would be very much obliged if Lord Lisbrian would excuse him for that day, he sat down himself and wrote a note peremptorily commanding him to ap-

pear forthwith, whether he chose to accompany them to the church or not—and, causing a pair of the horses, that stood ready in the stable, to be put to one of the carriages, he despatched it for him, in order to leave him no excuse. In as short a time after as could be expected, a servant came in and whispered Lord Lisbrian, according to his directions, that Mr. Tracey was arrived, and waiting his commands in the library.

Lord Lisbrian hastened to him. “So! what freak is this, Mr. Tracey?” he asked, the moment he saw him.

“No frake at all, my Lord,” he answered, quietly. “But I raally am not well; nor wouldn’t have left my house this day at any one’s bidden but your own; and I hope, my Lord, you’ll have the great kindness not to insist upon my stayin’. You may guess, my Lord, it isn’t a thrifle keeps me back on Lady Rosa and Misther Rochford’s wedding-day!”

“You do look ill,” Lord Lisbrian said, in a tone between remorse and chuckling anticipation; “but you know we have Mr. Clarendon here, who can cure everything.”

“No, my Lord, he cannot.”

“Why, what can he not cure?”

“The heart-ache, my Lord!” Lord Lisbrian burst into a loud laugh at the serious tone in which this was uttered.

“No! but then, you know, every one likes to have that.”

“Then, it’s before they have thried it, my Lord!”

“But what has given it to you, Tracey? Do you know, I’m rather offended to see you so low-spirited on an occasion of such rejoicing to us?”

“You needn’t, my Lord! It ought to satisfy you that I wouldn’t put you in my place this day if I could.”

“Wouldn’t you really, my poor fellow?” Lord Lisbrian said, with a sudden, transient feeling of gratitude and kindness—“well, I’ll tell you what it is, Tracey,”—but, so transient was it, that in its very utterance it died, and he went on in an altered tone, “I’ll tell you what I want with you, Tracey; the most awkward thing in the world has occurred! This man that was to have married Miss Kelly has sent word that he is not well, and cannot appear to-day—and as I have made a vow that the ceremony should not be deferred, I want you to appear as his proxy, and go through the ceremony with this young woman in his stead!”

But Lord Lisbrian overshot his mark! Tracey opened both his eyes and mouth as wide as he could open them,—fixed the former on Lord Lisbrian’s face for a moment, while the latter twitched and worked convulsively—and, first becoming even

paler than he was before, and then redder than any one had ever seen him in his life, he finally dropped on his knees, and clasping his hands together, and gazing in Lord Lisbrian's face with an intensity of agonizing inquiry that, perhaps, more beautiful features could not have expressed so strongly, he gasped out—"Is it—is it—is it, indeed, possible? Oh, don't go to deny it, my dearest Lord! Sure, I see it all now! Sure, I know you'd never put your poor Tracey through all this, nor even to him to be proxy for another man to the girl he loves himself, but for intending it to be himself! Oh, God ever bless you, my kind, my darling master!" and clasping his knees, and bending his tearful face upon them, he sobbed for a moment in silence.

"What does the fellow mean!" Lord Lisbrian exclaimed, endeavouring to disengage himself from Tracey's embrace, but obliged, at the same time, to pass his hand across his own eyes for a moment.

"It is as I tell you, Sir!" he added.

"No, no, it isn't, my Lord!" Tracey persisted, with the most unshaken confidence. "Sure, I see it all now as clear as day-light can make it. And I see now, that every one but myself knows it, too!—and that darling Lady Rosa, and her sweet peeps at me!—and Mr. Rochford's handsome smile!—and above all—oh, God love you, my Lord!

and let me see the poor girl now!—oh, this hour and day!” and he wrung his hands in a sort of ecstasy, and took a few steps across the room.

Lord Lisbrian saw that it was useless, and, *therefore*, that it would be cruel to attempt any longer to keep up the farce—and so, after a moment’s consideration, with the resignation of a martyr, he said—“Well, Tracey, you have spoiled the best fun I ever planned in my life! but since it is so, it can’t be helped—and so now I shall tell you all about it”—and he compelled poor Tracey to sit down, and listen patiently to every particular. “And now I think of it,” he said, “how is it that you were so ready to marry in the same poverty that has hitherto kept you single? I see you anticipated my bounty!”

“Whethen, see, my Lord!” Tracey answered, with an ingenuous smile—“May I not be married to-day—and that would have been an oath of little worth an hour ago—if it ever entered my head but, you know, just the way that when the sun shines we know we’ll have flowers, without thinking of them, I knew, when you planned it, it was for my good; but surely, before Heaven I can say, I never expected the half of what it is!”

“It is not half what you deserve, Tracey!” Lord Lisbrian said, warmly and sincerely—for, nothing now opposing his kind feelings, they were tri-

umphant—"But I will go now and send the young lady to you, and tell her *you consent*."

But Tracey's excitement had been a little sobered down by the details—and as his recollection was permitted to act, he said, "But do you think, my Lord, she'd come? I'm afeard, maybe, I had better go to her?"

"Where to?" Lord Lisbrian asked.

"Oh, faith, I don't know, my Lord," he said, shrinking back. "What'll we do?"

"Stay here, and I'll prevail on her to come with her mother, or some one who can then discreetly leave her, you know."

But Tracey's bashfulness was now awakened; and as Lord Lisbrian was leaving the room, he caught hold of his skirts, "Oh! wait one minute, my Lord!" he said. "I beg your pardon, but what'll I do at all? You're sure, now, my Lord; every one is accustomed to the thought of my being married?—O Lord! O Lord!—the priest and all?—and that I won't have to tell any one myself?"

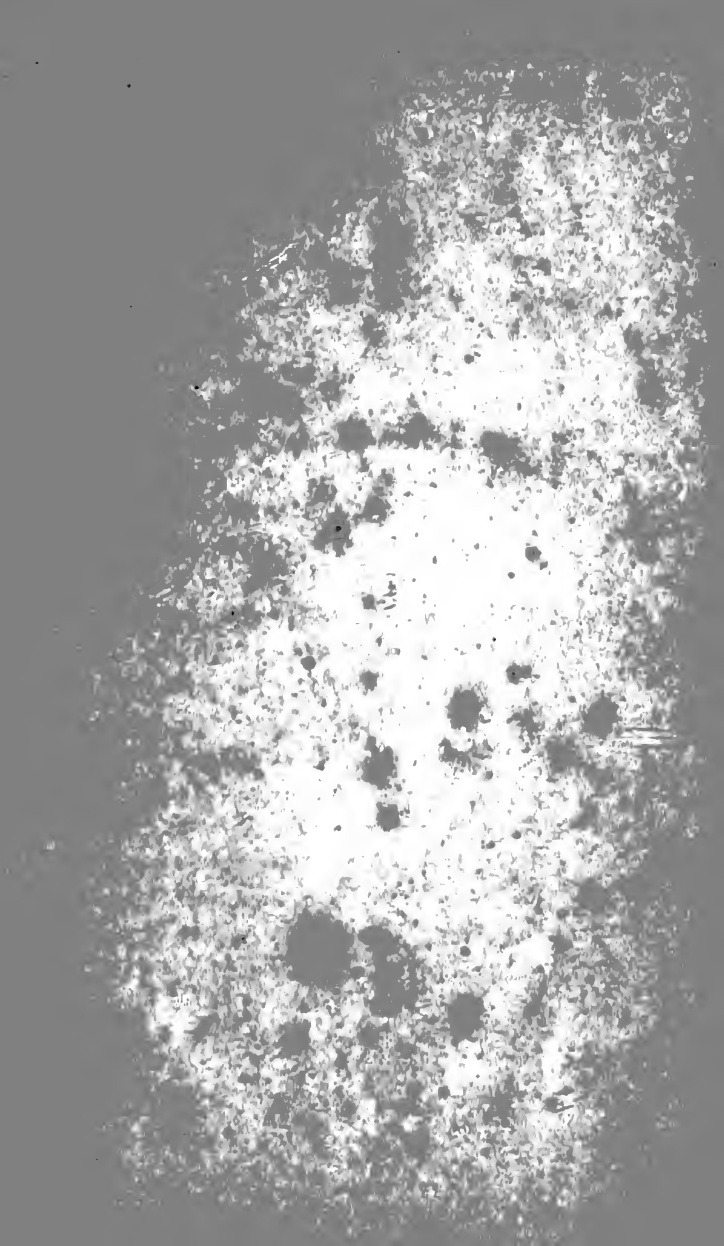
"Oh, not a soul! It is only new to yourself, I assure you! even Miss Kelly has considered herself a married woman for the last month, so that the honey-moon's over without you! But unless you let me go, I think no one will be married to-day, and you must answer to Rochford then!"

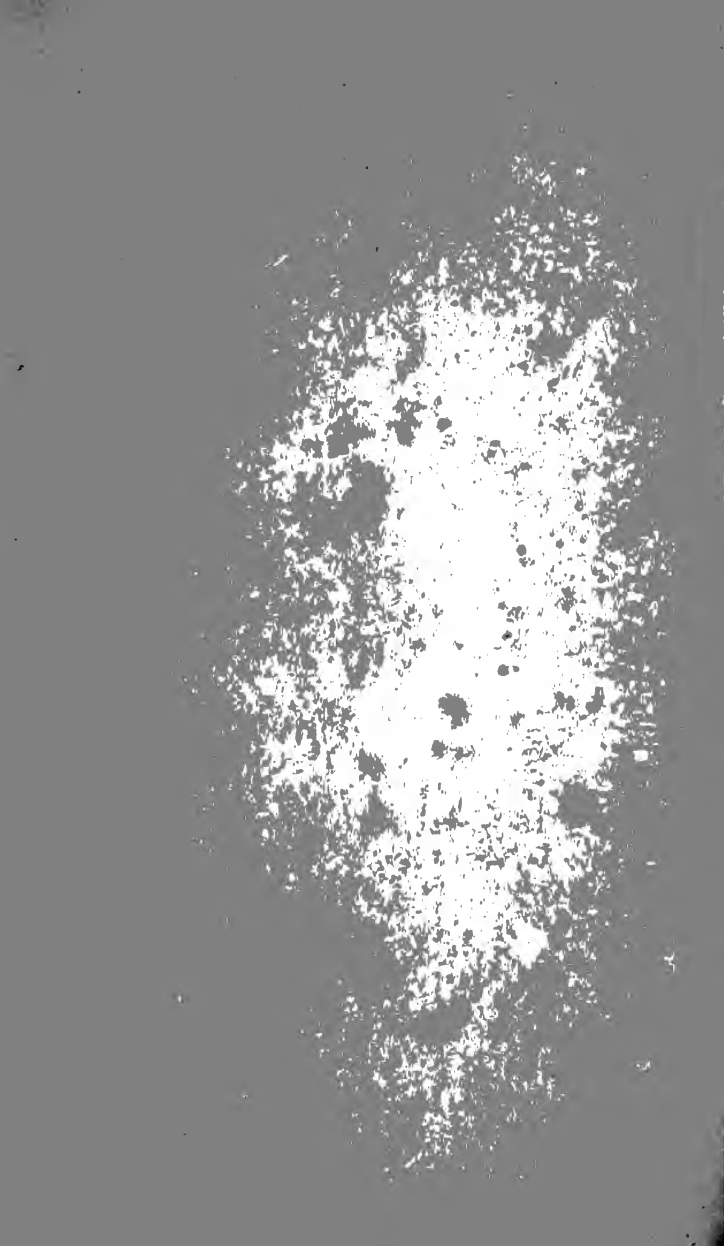
"Faith, then, I wouldn't like to have that to do!"

he said. "Did you ever, my Lord, see a man so much in love?—it's well for him it's no sin! Well, go, my Lord, in the name of Heaven! But oh! my dear Lord," he said, once more clasping his hands, and looking fervently up at him—"Oh! my dear Lord, be merciful to me! and as you've had your fun of me, don't, for mercy's sweet sake, make any more of me to-day!" Lord Lisbrian only answered by a peal of laughter, and escaped.

"Well, there's no denyin'," said Tracey, as he found himself alone, "that this is as quare a thing as ever happened to any one. Catherine Kelly! you truth of a good, kind girl!—well, see if I don't make you happy for this! as happy as a crachur of my kind can, at last! But to think of th' ould mother not knowin' a word of it till the daughter-in-law walks in to her! Well, thanks be God, she loves her as if she was her raal daughter; and a quare crachur it 'id be that wouldn't love you, Kitty Kelly! It's well I was dressed itself, guessin' this man wouldn't let me away again! Well, he's a fine-hearted man after all; and if he has his little ways, let them that hasn't throw the first stone at him, say I!" And with this simple, but deeply comprehensive sentence we drop the curtain—and bid our readers a grateful farewell.

T. C. Savill, Printer, 107, St. Martin's Lane, Charing Cross.







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